

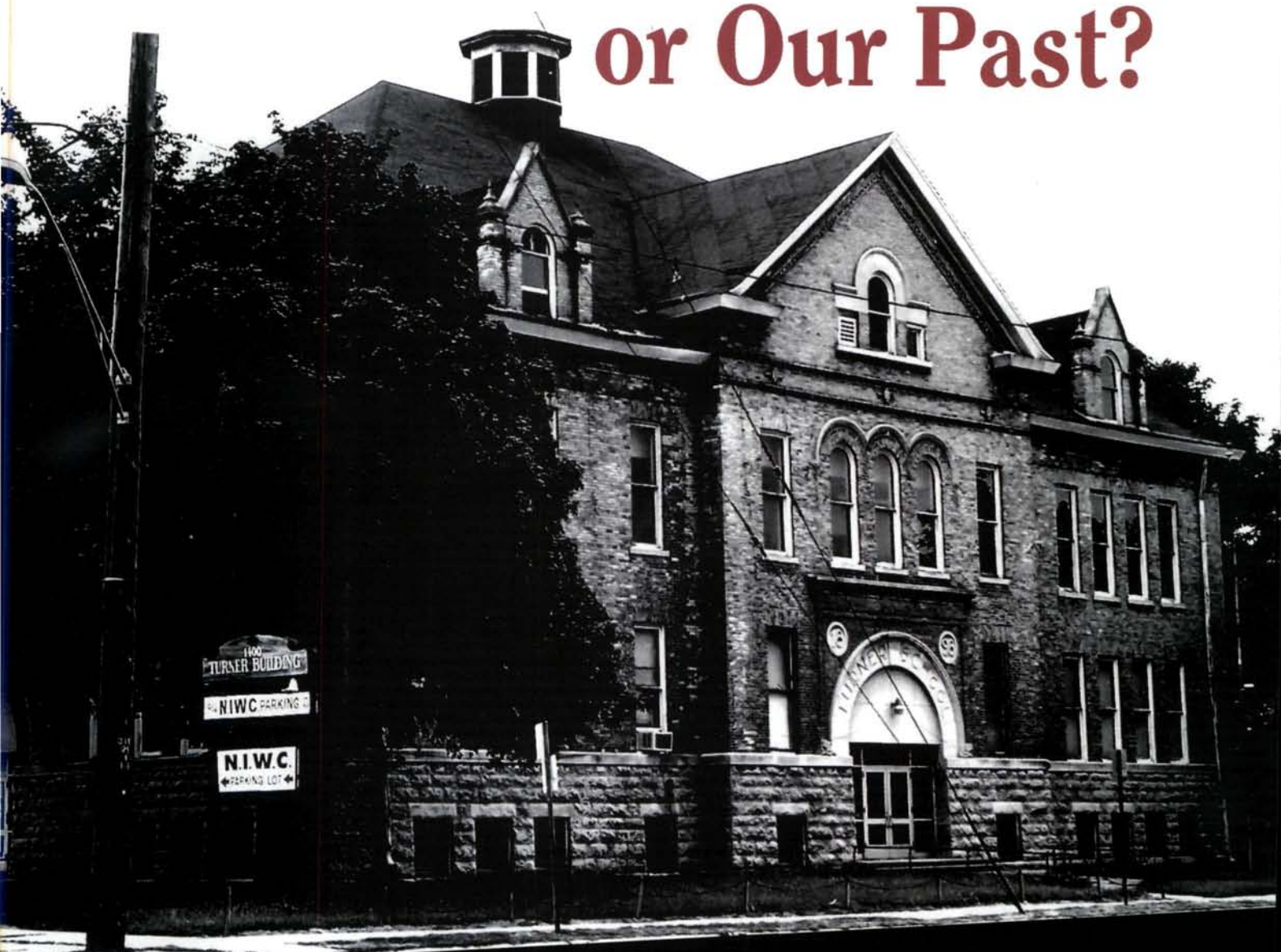
Chronicles

September 2004

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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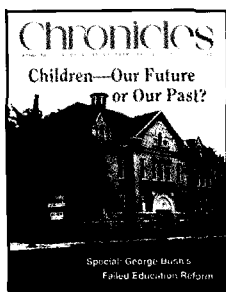
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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Vouching

Since Laurence M. Vance used his review ("Why Johnny Shouldn't Vouch," July) of two new books on parental choice in education to repeat his stale objections to school vouchers, I wish to correct his mistakes and bring readers up to date on the voucher debate.

Vance conveys three reservations he has about vouchers, which will be familiar to anyone who read the *Freeman* during the 1970's and 80's: Vouchers still rely on taxes to pay for schooling; they may lead to more government regulation of private schools; and they may encourage greater dependence on government. These are legitimate concerns but not compelling reasons for libertarians or paleoconservatives to oppose vouchers.

Ending public funding of schools may be the proper objective, but it is a losing proposition politically. The government-school establishment, financed by half-a-trillion dollars in taxes each year, diverts billions of dollars annually into defending its exclusive franchise. Real per-pupil spending by government schools is rising year after year, hardly a sign of waning power. Right or wrong, a large majority of the American public believes schools should be subsidized by taxpayers.

Vouchers are a promising tactic because they do not challenge this public consensus directly, focusing instead on whether a government monopoly is the right way to deliver the entitlement. Here, the public is on our side. They know private schools tend to be better than government schools, that government monopolies tend to be inefficient and unaccountable, and that religious liberty requires that government keep its hands off religiously affiliated schools.

Leaving the entitlement to "free" public education in place while privatizing its delivery does not create a new entitlement; it only alters the way a current entitlement is delivered. If adopted by cities and states nationwide (not by the "federal government," as Vance repeatedly says—libertarian advocates of vouchers want to abolish the federal Department of Education, too), millions of jobs would move from the government to the private sector. The funds and personnel used to defend the public-school monopoly would

shrink, and funds and personnel available to defend the autonomy of private schools would expand.

This is a critical point in the case for vouchers that critics such as Vance fail to address. In order to end the open-ended entitlement to tax-financed schooling, we first need to weaken the interest groups defending it and to strengthen or create new interest groups against it. Vouchers are already doing this. Nothing else we have tried has had this effect.

I have long argued (most recently, in Chapter 11 of *Education and Capitalism* by Herbert J. Walberg and Joseph L. Bast, 2003) that voucher programs, once in place, are likely to lead to public support for narrowing the entitlement to a "free" education by lowering the amount to what is necessary to buy a basic education in a competitive marketplace (probably less than half of current government per-pupil spending) and restricting eligibility to those who cannot afford to pay tuition. School vouchers would become similar to welfare and food stamps, part of the social safety net rather than a middle-class entitlement program. If libertarians ever become politically relevant enough to abolish the social safety net (and I'm not holding my breath), school vouchers would end with it.

Vance's second objection to vouchers, that they may lead to more government regulation of private schools, is a red herring. States (and, to a lesser degree, cities) are free to regulate secular schools to their heart's content; they don't need the excuse of vouchers or a "cash nexus" to exercise that authority. No state in the country has a constitutional provision protecting the freedom of private schools from excessive regulation. Such provisions are missing because the private-school sector in the United States is too small to defend itself against the giant government-school lobby, and because religious schools have as much protection as they apparently think they need under the federal Constitution. A voucher program, by dramatically expanding the private-school marketplace, would change this dynamic in favor of more, not less, private-school autonomy.

Vance's third objection, that vouchers may lead to more dependency on government, is a confused and confusing argument. Must we avoid doing any-

thing that might improve or replace the government schools attended by 87 percent of American children for fear that the parents of the remaining 13 percent would be tempted to withdraw their children from existing private schools or stop homeschooling? That is an odd position for a libertarian to take, because it means limiting the freedom of choice of the vast majority of parents *and* second-guessing the wisdom and commitment of parents who currently choose to keep their children out of government schools. It also confuses whose money is being talked about: It's not the government's money. How can it be right to deny parents/taxpayers some of their own tax dollars back in the form of a voucher (or tax credit, for that matter) for fear that they wouldn't spend it the "right" way?

The school-voucher movement is one of the most successful efforts now underway to translate libertarian ideas into public policy. Libertarians and paleoconservatives ought to be at the table helping design programs that protect school autonomy, narrow rather than enlarge the entitlement to taxpayer dollars, and protect the interests of homeschoolers and others who choose unconventional schools. Recycling old worries and wishing for utopia won't save a single child now trapped in a failing school.

—Joseph L. Bast
Chicago, IL

Mr. Vance Replies:

Mr. Bast needs to make up his mind. Are my "three reservations" about vouchers "stale objections," or are they "legiti-

mate concerns"? Whether "a large majority of the American public believes schools should be subsidized by the taxpayers," and whether "ending funding of public schools" is "a losing proposition politically," are of no concern to me. A large majority of Americans believe that many things should be subsidized by taxpayers. To advocate an end to the funding of these "things" is indeed "a losing proposition politically." My philosophical opposition to vouchers as an income-transfer program is not in the least bit tempered by public opinion or political considerations.

Mr. Bast argues that eligibility for voucher programs should be restricted "to those who cannot afford to pay tuition." It is therefore ludicrous for him to insist, later, that "parents/taxpayers" should not be denied "some of their own tax dollars back in the form of a voucher." Most of those eligible for vouchers will pay little or no taxes.

Like Merrifield and Bolick, Bast doesn't think that vouchers will lead to increased government regulation of private schools. His argument—that this is a red herring because states have the power to regulate private schools now—ignores what I pointed out in my review: "It is inconceivable that the government (federal or state) would ever provide money to parents or schools without attaching strings to its largesse." Calling vouchers "parental choice in education," and thereby perpetuating the myth that parents have no "school choice" right now, is the real red herring.

I am perplexed as to why my objection "that vouchers may lead to more dependency on government" is called "a confused and confusing argument."

Bast himself says that "school vouchers would become similar to welfare and food stamps." Are there any "entitlements" that foster increased dependency on government more than these two?

I cannot imagine how "the school-voucher movement" translates "libertarian ideas into public policy," since forcing someone to pay for the education of someone else's children is the antithesis of libertarianism.

Since Mr. Bast mentioned the *Freeman*, I will close with the words of one who wrote extensively for that publication, Ludwig von Mises: "There is, in fact, only *one* solution: the state, the government, the laws must not in any way concern themselves with schooling or education. Public funds must not be used for such purposes. The rearing and instruction of youth must be left entirely to parents and to private associations and institutions."

On New Faces

If the sloppy, spastic Etch-a-Sketch "likenesses" of your regular writers have been deep-sixed at *Chronicles* forever, you have improved the look of your great magazine significantly.

—Mark Kennedy
Sault Ste. Marie, MI

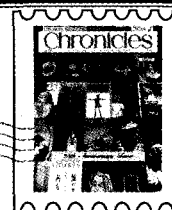
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Instinct for the Capillaries: The 9-11 Commission Report

The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9-11 Commission) released its report to much media fanfare in late July. Although the commissioners labored mightily, they have given birth to a mouse. The report is safe, cautious, and eminently bipartisan. In other words, it largely avoids discussing the most serious issues surrounding the threat that radical Islamic terrorism poses to America.

Much of the document deals with the failures of the FBI, the CIA, and other agencies to anticipate and thwart the devastating attacks launched on September 11, 2001. Some of the criticisms (the lack of communication between key agencies, the absence of effective screening mechanisms at the borders, and the missing of key clues) are warranted. Others are classic exercises in 20-20 hindsight.

The commission also addresses a few larger issues, and most of its judgments are balanced rather than inflammatory. For example, the report examines a series of contacts between the government of Iraq and Al Qaeda operatives. In marked contrast to the hysterical exaggerations of neoconservative war hawks, however, the commissioners note that those contacts were sporadic and that Saddam Hussein's regime rebuffed Osama bin Laden's request for space to establish training camps as well as assistance in acquiring weapons. The members of the commission conclude that there is

no evidence that these or earlier contacts ever developed into a collaborative operational relationship. Nor have we seen evidence indicating that Iraq cooperated with Al Qaeda in developing or carrying out attacks against the United States.

Although the commission studiously avoids discussing the merits of the Iraq war (to avoid controversy and to make it possible to have a unanimous report), those conclusions may make the Bush administration uneasy. After all, the President and his advisors cited two major reasons for attacking Iraq: the alleged presence of weapons of mass destruction and the alleged connections between

Baghdad and Al Qaeda. The first allegation was discredited long ago, and now the commission has effectively discredited the second.

Another pertinent issue is the relationship between Iran and Al Qaeda. That relationship seems more substantive and intriguing than the minimal one between Iraq and the terrorist group. Senior Al Qaeda operatives traveled to Iran for training in explosives in the early 1990's, and the commission cites evidence that both Iran and Al Qaeda may have been involved in the Khobar Towers attack. There also is evidence that Iranian officials allowed at least eight, and perhaps as many as ten, of the September 11 hijackers to transit their country from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia. The report stresses, however, that there is no evidence that Tehran knew about the terrorist plot, much less had anything to do with it. Predictably, neoconservatives ignore that caveat and cite the report as justification for a policy to topple the fundamentalist Islamic regime.

More important than the issues the report addresses are the issues it skirts. The failure to discuss the Bush administration's argument that the Iraq war was a crucial part of the War on Terror is an obvious omission, but there are others. Although the commission properly chastises both the Bush and Clinton administrations for not taking the Al Qaeda threat seriously enough, there is little discussion about what either administration was doing instead of focusing on Bin Laden.

The Clinton administration certainly was not inactive on the foreign-policy front during the mid and late 1990's. That was the period in which the United States invaded and occupied Haiti, intervened in the Bosnian civil war, enforced draconian sanctions against Iraq and periodically bombed that country, and wrested Serbia's province of Kosovo away from Belgrade's jurisdiction through a NATO air war. Not one of those interventions was relevant to America's security interests. But our attention and resources were focused on those matters instead of the very real threat that was emerging. The Bush administration's obsession with ousting Saddam Hussein (which predated

the September 11 attacks) reflected similar myopia.

An even more serious deficiency is the commission's tepid treatment of the crucial issue of how U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East creates resentment that strengthens the forces of radical Islamic terrorism. In fairness, the report presents a more sophisticated treatment than the Bush administration's argument that the terrorists hate America because of her commitment to freedom and other noble values. (One wag has aptly described this as the "they hate us because we're beautiful" thesis.) Instead, the commission acknowledges that there is a great deal of anger in the Muslim world at U.S. policies.

But the commission's prescriptions are either contradictory or anemic. An example of the former is the call for a greater commitment to democracy and freedom in the Middle East juxtaposed with proposals for close cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan—two of the least democratic governments in the region. An example of the latter is the admission that U.S. support of Israel antagonizes large swaths of Muslim opinion without an accompanying call for any meaningful change in U.S. policy toward Israel.

Instead of addressing such sensitive matters, the commission merely calls for a greater effort at public diplomacy to win the hearts and minds of Muslims. That approach woefully misconstrues the problem. The reservoir of hatred in the Middle East toward the United States that has been building for decades is not the result of a failure of Muslims to understand U.S. policy. They understand it all too well. And they are not going to be won over by a slick, Madison Avenue p.r. campaign. The problem is the content of U.S. foreign policy, not its packaging.

By failing to address these and other vital issues, the 9-11 Commission has missed an historic opportunity. It chose to play it safe and issue a bland, comfortable report that focuses on secondary matters. Instead of going for the jugular of Washington's misguided and dangerous policy in the Middle East, the commission showed that it had an instinct only for the capillaries. That likely suits the Bush administration and the war-hawk faction just fine.

"IMMIGRATION is our strength!" Or so neoconservatives and mainstream Republicans have argued for 20 years. Hispanic immigration, especially. Mexican immigrants, neoconservative wisdom has it, are hardworking, entrepreneurial, religious, and dedicated to family values. Not only are they model American citizens waiting to happen; they are natural Republican voters to be encouraged, developed, and sent marching off to victory at the polls! In fact, these scores of millions of Julios and Rosas, Jésuses and Concepcions, Teodoros and Doroteas are the perfect stealth weapon by which to hoist those pandering Democrats on their own petard. The New Emerging Republican Majority, as overseen by a Spanish-speaking president from Tejas, would have a distinctly Aztec component. If, that is, Republican politicians were to refrain from "immigrant-bashing," accept the immigrant invasion from south of the border (and elsewhere) as an unstoppable and essentially benign force of nature, and amnesty each and every invader who succeeded in hauling his carcass north of the Rio Grande.

Nativists and other naysayers insisted the scenario would not play out as written. Hispanics, they warned, despite certain conservative social instincts, being members of a minority race and belonging to a low socioeconomic class, are the natural prey of the Democratic machine. Now, a recent poll by the *Washington Post*, and another sponsored by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation, suggest that the naysayers were right all along, and the happy-talkers wrong as usual. (Remember, the people who claimed that the hordes of ragtag, poverty-stricken *Indios* from Mexico amount to just so many of W.S. Gilbert's "little conservatives" are the same people who were insisting, a year and a half ago, that the American remake of Iraq would be a "cakewalk.")

The *Post* poll indicates that taxes, the federal budget deficit, education, terrorism, and the Iraq war loom as larger concerns among Hispanic voters than immigration does. This is bad news for President Bush, Karl Rove, and the party they lead and misdirect because it suggests that, come November, the President will not be the beneficiary of gratitude paid in the form of votes for the amnes-

ty plan he launched to much fanfare last January. Indeed, as Samuel Francis has written, "The only people for more immigration are the Open Borders crowd. Immigration, let alone amnesty, doesn't even register with Hispanic voters." What *do* register are concerns historically addressed and assuaged by the Democratic Party, whose traditional constituencies—Mexicans, social liberals (fleeing liberal California), menial workers in the West's booming playground resorts—have gained increased presence, since 2000, in the Southwestern states, which George W. Bush ought to be able to account his loyal home base. The *Wall Street Journal* has acknowledged the electoral danger (without apology and without noting that, for a generation, it has been a home to immigrationist writers and editors such as Paul Gigot, Linda Chavez, and the late Robert Bartley), while remarking that, in the ten presidential elections between 1952 and 1988, just two Western states—Washington and Hawaii—voted Democratic on more than two occasions. The Republican Party needs the West; and this President, especially, needs the Southwest. Urged by neoconservative advisors, he may well prove himself too clever by half by losing it and falling flat on his face on the long cakewalk back to the Oval Office.

Should that be George W. Bush's unhappy fate, the neoconservatives will be as unrepentant in respect of their failed Mexican strategy as they have been in regard to their disastrous policies in the Middle East. What would they have to repent of, after all? As William Kristol coyly suggested last summer, they could as easily rechristen themselves "neoliberals" and seek place, preferment, and power in a Kerry administration. In addition to which, Bush win or Bush lose, they have already largely accomplished the fundamental goal of their immigration policy, left prudently unstated before John Podhoretz—in a fit of exultant defiance last spring—let it all hang out: to transform the face of the Republican Party, and that of the American nation itself.

—Chilton Williamson, Jr.

RALPH NADER faces several insurmountable obstacles in his 2004 bid for the presidency, from overcoming restric-

tive ballot-access laws used to limit political competition to forging an *ad hoc* coalition between elements of the political left and right.

Public-choice economics, popularized by Gordon Tullock and 1986 Nobel Laureate James M. Buchanan, argues that politicians, like individuals, pursue their own self-interest. Political competition would benefit voters by giving them a greater choice of candidates. Competition does not benefit incumbents, however, leading them to pass laws that make it difficult, if not impossible, for third parties and independents like Nader to qualify for a place on the ballot. Nader will not be on the ballot in all 50 states in 2004.

This does not mean that Nader lacks all leverage. On the eve of the last presidential election, *Chronicles* noted that Nader and paleoconservative Pat Buchanan "need not win states to have an impact on the political process." That is exactly what happened, with Buchanan holding balance of power in five states and Nader achieving it in eight, including Florida. Many Western states have modest ballot-access requirements. Nevada, for example, requires only 5,019 signatures for parties and candidates and also gives voters the choice "None Of These Candidates," a reform that Nader supports. Yet other states discourage competition. In 1996, Nader was on the ballot in only 23 states. According to his campaign, he had to file eight lawsuits in 2000 to achieve ballot access in 43 states and the District of Columbia. Nader did not qualify in other states that have more onerous restrictions. Oklahoma is one example: It is the only state that requires a showing of five percent of voters to put a new party on the ballot for statewide office, reports *Ballot Access News*, the definitive source on electoral reform. Nader's campaign has filed suit this year challenging the constitutionality of Texas's ballot-access law, which forces independents to collect 20,000 more signatures than third parties must collect—and give them two fewer weeks to do so. A Nader release says voters want at least one candidate on the ballot who opposes the war and sending more troops to Iraq.

The silliest argument advanced by Nader's critics is that he should withdraw from the race for the sake of his legacy. Nader's anticorporate agenda

(whatever one may think of it) is the foundation of his campaign—and his legacy. His platform includes calls for “reallocation of the federal budget that puts human needs before corporate greed and corporate militarism” and the abolition of corporate “personhood.” His legacy is already well established. One reason no Republican will abolish the Occupational Safety and Health Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency is that *Republican* President Richard M. Nixon created them in response to Nader and his followers. Nader claims that he is appealing to those libertarians and conservatives alienated by President George W. Bush. Some, but not many, conservatives may vote for Nader on the basis of his anticorporate platform. Others appear attracted by his opposition to the Iraq war and the PATRIOT Act. Yet Nader’s running mate, Peter Miguel Camejo, is an odd choice for a candidate wanting to take conservatives to the ball. According to an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 31, 2002): “On the controversial and volatile issue of abortion, Green Party candidate for governor Peter Camejo may have a more personal—and painful—view . . .

“When he was in college, a girlfriend became pregnant. Fearfully, they sought—and got—an illegal abortion.

“I was in no position to have a child,” Camejo said recently.”

Nader remains a man of the left. That does not mean that he should be denied ballot access. Laws that restrict political competition are an insult to voters, as are “debates” that ignore independents and third parties. However, a serious fusionist would have chosen a man or woman of the right as his running mate. The “radical center” identified by sociologist Donald Warren remains ripe for such a prospect.

—Greg Kaza

BOBBY FISCHER, the former world chess champion who is wanted by the U.S. government for allegedly defying U.N. sanctions by playing a match in Yugoslavia in 1992, was detained at Tokyo’s Narita airport on July 15 as he tried to leave for the Philippines. Fischer was traveling on a passport that the State Department says had been invalidated last December. At the time of this writing, he is in a Japanese jail, fighting extradition to the United States and seeking an offer of political asylum in any country willing

to accept him.

The story is bizarre and may prove that being paranoid does not mean “they” are not out to get you. It started 61 years ago, when a boy, Robert James, was born out of wedlock to a Jewish-American woman whose communist sympathies took her to the Soviet Union on the eve of World War II. Two of the few people who knew Fischer well, Serbian grandmasters Svetozar Gligoric and Ljubomir Ljubojevic, point out that he first attracted the authorities’ attention even before his birth because his father was a prominent Hungarian atomic physicist, Pal Nemenyi, who was involved with the Manhattan Project. Nemenyi died soon thereafter—“Bobby” never got to know his father—but the security implications of the affair were obvious. A suspicion of links with the Soviet secret service surrounded the mother, and eventually the boy, for years to come.

At the age of six, Fischer learned to play chess and declared that he did not want to do anything else for the rest of his life. By 15, he was the youngest grandmaster in history, and, a year later, he quit school, calling it a waste of time. A classic *Wunderkind* with an IQ of 180, he had an astonishing memory that enabled him to recall every move of all his championship games.

Throughout his early decades, Fischer remained very close to his mother, even though his political views were developing in the opposite direction. His anti-communism provided him with a double motive to try to deprive the Soviets of the world title they had held for decades: to prove that he was the best, and to deprive them of a propaganda weapon (“to teach them some humility,” as he put it). His moment of glory finally came in 1972, when he won the famous Fischer-Spassky world-championship match in Reykjavik.

The event was filled with Cold War drama. Soviet officials accused the United States of trying to throw off Spassky by using secret electronic devices pointed at their player. Fischer’s chair and the whole playing area were subjected to a thorough examination. All light fixtures were removed from the ceiling, but only two dead flies were found. A member of the Soviet delegation was finally rebuked for demanding that an autopsy be performed on the insects. Not to be outdone, Fischer had all fillings in his teeth replaced on the eve of the match, fearing the presence of Soviet implants that could

be activated to distract him at crucial moments. On September 1, 1972, Fischer became world champion after Spassky conceded a match in which Fischer won 7 games, drew 11, and lost 3.

In April of the following year, the World Chess Federation (FIDE) demanded that Fischer accept Anatoly Karpov’s challenge, which he refused, claiming that he needed more time to prepare for the match. FIDE insisted, and his title was taken away in what Gligoric calls a dishonest setup designed to remove a troublesome and increasingly unconventional genius from the chess throne. At this time, Fischer’s latent eccentricities became more strongly pronounced. He felt hurt that President Nixon had not received him after the Spassky match and suspected that the odium of the officialdom was connected to his antiestablishmentarian and increasingly anti-Jewish views. He once asked Gligoric to visit him incognito in Los Angeles and spoke of his woes and fears. “As we were parting, he gave me a two-way radio of the kind used by seamen, which he used to communicate with the outside world,” Gligoric remembers. “He spent the last \$50 he had on him at that time on that gift.”

Fischer remained in seclusion for years, until 1992, when a shady Serbian businessman and chess aficionado, Jezdimir Vasiljevic, had the strange notion of staging a replay of the Reykjavik match in the Montenegrin seaside resort of Sveti Stefan. He persuaded Fischer to come out of seclusion for the occasion. Spassky—by that time, a French citizen—was also willing.

The second match proved in many ways more odd than the first. The war in Bosnia—a mere hour’s drive from Sveti Stefan—was in full swing, and Serbia and Montenegro were under U.N. sanctions, yet Mr. Vasiljevic was staging a world-class media spectacle and implicitly throwing down a gauntlet for the “international community.” His show smacked of Serbian *inat*—roughly translated, “proudly stubborn spite”—and Bobby Fischer just loved it. At a press conference upon arrival in Yugoslavia, he pulled out an order from the U.S. Treasury Department, warning him that he would be violating sanctions if he went ahead with the match, and spat on it. The match went ahead, and Fischer won again, with 10 wins, 5 losses, and 15 draws. That was the only time in the last 31 years that he has played chess in public.

Ever since, Fischer has been theoretically under the threat of up to ten years in prison, a fine, and the forfeiture of three million dollars in prize money should he ever return to the United States. (The French authorities did not regard Spassky's participation as a violation of the sanctions.) As the years went by, it appeared that the United States would let the matter quietly rest, and Gligoric says he was under the impression that "an arrangement" had been reached. Solvent again, Fischer divided his time between Europe and the Far East. His passport was apparently renewed five years ago by the U.S. embassy in Berne without a glitch. When he arrived in Tokyo last April, the Japanese immigration authorities did not get a "flag" as his passport was swiped through the computer.

Some commentators privately assert that Fischer's current problems are linked to his reappearance in public after September 11, when he gave an interview to a Filipino radio station praising the terrorist attacks, and to his increasingly strident antisemitic remarks. Such statements, damaging to Fischer's reputation and reprehensible as they are, are no worse than thousands of remarks heard in mosques and Islamic centers all over the United States every Friday. Fischer's original alleged sin—violating the U.N. sanctions—was not deemed a crime by France, also a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, and it would be strange indeed if the United States under George W. Bush were to prove more internationalist-minded today than France under François Mitterand a decade ago. If Fischer is nevertheless extradited and tried, some commentators predict that he will be deemed mentally unstable and confined to an institution. The parallel between Fischer in 2004 and Ezra Pound in 1944 would then become obvious, and the underlying message to those deemed guilty of thought crimes would remain the same.

—Srdja Trifkovic

PAUL PICCONE, R.I.P. The death on July 12 of Paul Piccone, the ebullient editor of *Telos*, has deprived *Chronicles* of a close friend and energetic collaborator. Paul exchanged articles and ideas happily with the editors of this journal and invited Thomas Fleming, Samuel Francis, and me to participate in his never-ending conferences, always put together on the spur of the moment, lambasting the

modern state. His concept of a discussion was to have several agitated participants go head to head, before he would break up the fight by shouting everyone else. And his voice was unique, with its resonance, Abruzzese accent, and the shower of words that it carried. Paul could mix indelicate phrases with arcane philosophical terms and multiple allusions to long-dead European social theorists—all in a single unexpected outburst. Ideas excited him more than they did almost any other man I have met, and part of his considerable charm arose from the fact that, even in his 50's and 60's, he personified Plato's aspiring philosopher, who throbbed with the passion to know.

His generosity was legendary, even for a Latin. Among his friends, it was a joke that Paul would bring home a hobo, if given a chance, from his Lower East Side neighborhood, over the protests of his long-suffering wife, and feed and lodge him for months. Although not the hobo in question, I enjoyed the hospitality of Paul and Mary more times than I can remember. I am embarrassed that Paul left this world before I could return even a small measure of his kindness. Although Aristotle treated generosity as something that cannot be displayed in excess, he might have found in Paul a possible exception. On one occasion, when I expressed interest in an object on his wall, he took down the flag of the Lega Nord, folded it, and gave it to me as a gift. Only later did I learn that he had gone to considerable effort to obtain it.

In his youth, Paul had been a New Leftist, and, when I got to know him in the late 80's, he still regarded himself in some very loose sense as a Marxist. The tradition of critical theory, going back to the Frankfurt School, that his magazine was intended to embody grew out of a movement of the German radical left. And articles in *Telos* and at least some members of the editorial board testified to this genealogical connection. Yet nothing in the editor's demeanor or majestically pronounced views on sex, family structure, and the European populist right would make one think of the left. His Italian character was too firmly rooted, and we could see that character when he told us about how his hometown of Aquila had ruinously resisted Roman domination during the invasion of Hannibal. (He would relate this narrative to underline his mountainous *compaesani's* stubborn spirit of independence.) For those of us who treasured his com-

pany and valued his kindly, buoyant personality, his death has created a void. It is hard to imagine meeting someone who combines his extraordinary qualities ever again. To his loving wife and to Gary Ulmen, his daily collaborator in his publishing labors, both of whom attended him faithfully through his final illness, we extend heartfelt sympathies.

—Paul Gottfried

OBITER DICTA: The editors and staff of *Chronicles* and The Rockford Institute thank the **Charlotte and Walter Kohler Charitable Trust** for graciously underwriting this issue of your favorite magazine.

Our first poet is **William Baer**, the founding editor of the *Formalist*, a journal of metrical poetry. Dr. Baer has published two books of poems: *The Unfortunates*, which received the T.S. Eliot Prize in 1997, and *"Borges" and Other Sonnets* (2003). His work has appeared in the *Hudson Review*, the *New Criterion*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, the *Southern Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, the *Iowa Review*, the *Antioch Review*, the *New York Quarterly*, and elsewhere. He currently teaches creative writing and cinema at the University of Evansville in southwest Indiana.

Our second poet is **Ruth Moose**, whose work has appeared in the *Atlantic*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Yankee*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. She is a member of the creative faculty at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and has published two collections of short stories.

Our inside art is provided by **Joy McCarnan**, the latest addition to the staff of The Rockford Institute. Miss McCarnan, who holds a master's degree in theology from Bob Jones University, is the assistant director of The Rockford Institute's **Center for the Restoration of Humane Learning**, which is dedicated to helping academics, homeschoolers, and autodidacts learn the classics of Western civilization. Visit *The Autodidact* at ChroniclesMagazine.org for more information.

Our cover photo (of the Fort Turner building—once a public school; now, an abortion clinic) is provided by *Chronicles'* executive editor, **Scott P. Richert**. See this month's *Rockford Files* (page 36) for more details on it and on the pictures scattered throughout the issue.



Fighting Among the Hedgerows

As a young college student, I accepted implicitly all the goals of the Civil Rights revolution. I believed firmly that schools should be integrated, even though the nearest thing to integration I had ever experienced was going to school with a part-Ojibwe in Superior, Wisconsin, a lily-white town in which black people were not allowed to reside. Imagine the comeuppance I received when an intelligent and sincere black radical, with whom I was having lunch, informed me that he really did not need anything from white people and that he thought integration was, to some extent, a delusion. *What makes you think*, he asked defiantly, *that black children can't learn, unless they are rubbing elbows with white children?*

This black "nationalist" (for want of a better word) did not hate white people, and he was hardly a radical; indeed, he went on to a distinguished career in public life. But the question he asked never left me.

This is not a question of absolutes. Under many circumstances, an ethnically integrated school makes a good deal of sense, but there are also times and places where it does not—in Bosnia or Ireland, to cite just two examples, where young people cannot become full members of the tribe if the enemies of the tribe are present during the cultural indoctrination into the secret tribal history, whether of Muslims or Orangemen. Of course, the liberals who rule the world would say that Bosnia and Northern Ireland are precisely the places where ethnic and religious integration must be imposed by the wise and benevolent international community, but that is not because they love peace. It is because they hate nations.

Every nation and ethnicity has its own story to tell, its own take on the history of the world, and it cannot really tell that story in the presence of many outsiders, especially outsiders with rival versions. In Ireland, before the days of government schooling, Protestants went to their schools, and Catholics either had to be educated among the hedgerows or, when the nice Englishmen graciously gave their permission, in Catholic schools. This is unacceptable to liberal

universalists, who insist that there can be no justice so long as one man can regard his own culture and religion as superior to another man's culture and religion.

The teaching of literature and history is the vital center of education, because the stories of Arthur and Alfred, Good King Hal and Bad Queen Bess have made the English *English*, in the same way that Greeks became Greek by hearing the tales of Achilles and Odysseus. Now, it is true that we Americans are still hearing those tales. As Chesterton observed, so long as there are civilized men, they will be talking of Troy. We talk of Troy in order to become civilized, however, while they talked of Troy as part of the history that made them who they were.

The pernicious effects of the universalist point of view are not restricted to political programs for ethnic and religious integration. Modern nation-states constructed vast systems of public education as part of their program of eliminating the competing loyalties of Church and region. New England's public schools aimed, first, at imposing Unitarianism; next, at forcibly converting Catholic children; and then, when their ideology took over the national government, at subverting the loyalty of recently conquered Southerners and their naive Trinitarian faith. The great American Calvinist Robert Lewis Dabney, who recognized the true goals of the project, opposed the establishment of public schooling in Virginia in the 1870's. The enemy then was provincialism in all its forms—Catholic, Calvinist, Southern, or even Western. It still is.

Maurice Barrès, a younger French contemporary of Dabney, wrote a brilliant case study of liberal education's campaign against provincialism—and its deadly consequences—in his novel *Les déracinés*. Barrès, although born in Charmes and educated at the *lycée* in Nancy, had gone to Paris, where he became an individualist and aesthete in the circle of Leconte de Lisle, writing books (in the 1890's) with such titles as *Un homme libre* and *L'individualiste*. He ended his life as the great exponent of French nationalism, indeed as the founder of the modern French nationalism that is con-

servative and patriotic instead of Jacobin. What happened?

What happened is that the imaginative and erudite author went back to his native Lorraine, where he sat among the melancholy ruins of an ancient chateau and reflected on the deeds of so many unknown men of earlier times. The bones of these men, dead and gone, were not the bones of strangers: They were his own people of Lorraine. The fruits of these reflections were a renewed sense of French patriotism and a deepened affection for the native soil of Lorraine.

In *Les déracinés* (1897), Barrès chronicled the adventures of a group of boys at his own *lycée* in Nancy. Their philosophy teacher, brilliant and ruthless, instills in them vast, almost Napoleonic ambitions to put their talents into the service of the ongoing revolutionary liberal tradition. What happens to the boys in Paris is the subject of the novel. Some become dissolute; others are reduced to poverty; but all begin to collaborate on a journal of the progressive type. In the end, two of them murder a woman for her money, and the principal hero achieves the success of which he had dreamed. Returning to Nancy to be feted, his philosophy teacher pronounces the final verdict: "I used to admire your talent, . . . but what I especially admire is that you are at this point liberated from every intonation and, more generally, of every peculiarity of Lorraine."

As the years went on, Barrès waxed mystical on the significance of his native land (and of others'). His extraordinary book *La colline inspirée* tells the story of a hill in Lorraine that had been sacred to Celts and Germans and became a great monastic center in the duchy of Burgundy, and he lauds the great ladies of Lorraine: Mary Stuart (her mother was Mary of Guise, and the Guises were of Lorraine), Marie-Antoinette, and Jeanne Darc. He thus claimed three great national martyrs for Lorraine, including the refounder of France.

Maurice Barrès became a French nationalist only by becoming a Lorraine provincialist. What is ironic is that, while there is today a France, and a Germany, and even a Belgium and a Netherlands,

there is no country of Lorraine. With the benefit of hindsight, we can argue that France and Germany were destined to be, while Lorraine was doomed not to be—but then how would we explain Belgium and Switzerland?

Lorraine—or, as it was then called, Lotharingia—had been in the portion given the Emperor Lothair, grandson of Charlemagne, by the Treaty of Verdun in 843, stretching from the Netherlands down to Aachen and east to Cologne. Lothair also received Provence and much of Switzerland and Northern Italy. His son, King Lothair, was given the northern part, which took its name from him. Lothair had no male heirs by his wife, and Pope Nicholas I had ruled against Lothair's divorce and false marriage to his concubine, by whom he did have a son. After his death, his possessions were divided between Frankish and German rulers, though Otto the Great subsequently controlled most of it.

Eventually, Lorraine was split between Upper (*i.e.*, Southern) and Lower (Northern) Lorraine. Lower Lorraine disappears from history, but upper Lorraine was not entirely extinguished until the late 18th century. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the dukes of Burgundy reassembled many parts of the old kingdom—the Low Countries and Franche-Comté, but also part of Germany all the way to Cologne—into a powerful state that defied the kings of France. The stumbling block was Lorraine itself, a vital corridor connecting the Low Countries with Burgundy proper. Duke Charles the Bold died trying to hold Lorraine, which passed (along with Burgundy eventually) into the control of France, while the Low Countries passed to his grandson (by his daughter Mary) Emperor Charles V, the most powerful ruler of the 16th century.

The failure of both Lothair and Charles the Bold to produce male heirs may be a sufficient explanation for the collapse of Lotharingia and, later, of Burgundy. However, it is also true that both countries were multiethnic and polyglot, and neither succeeded in generating the sense of national identity that was beginning to unite the French and the Germans. Neither produced a national poet or a national myth, and, after the Reformation, there was little to connect the Protestants of Holland and Germany with the Catholics of Burgundy. An imaginative genius like Barrès could find the threads connecting Joan of Arc to Charles V. Ordinary people could not.

Today, we are fighting the same battle that Dabney and Barrès fought, only on a more limited field, because the enemy has occupied all our fortresses and redoubts, leaving us only the hedgerows to dispute. That field is multiculturalism, whose purpose is the destruction of all cultures.

Most people of conservative inclination seem to know what multiculturalism is and why it is evil, but what is the alternative? If the barbaric term *multiculturalism* refers to programs aimed at educating children away from the dominant culture of their society by indoctrinating them into the glories of alternative cultures, then *uniculturalism* (dreadful word!) would be the teaching of one culture, presumably the dominant one. This is, in fact, what we used to call humane letters or “the humanities,” the literature, history, and philosophy of the peoples (Greek, Roman, European) who laid the foundations of our civilization.

The multicultural struggle is not the abstract argument over “values” engaged in by semiliterate neoconservatives. The struggle is over the national identity of the American people, and a conservative side, if conservative voices are to be heard at all, must declare against all abstract definitions of *America*, whether Marxist or democratic capitalist. There is not much that can be made out of American or English folk culture, when the folk cuisine is taco pie and Pepsi (good Americans drink Coke) and the folk music is either rap or the androgynous drug-moans of “alternative” music (anything, even punk or heavy metal, is preferable), but we still have some dim memories of Shakespeare and Homer that can be revived, and there is a growing “back to the classics” movement among both Calvinist and Catholic families.

The restoration of a humanities curriculum based on the ancient classics, English literature, and European and American history would not create an American nation in the sense that Ireland, 50 years ago, was a nation, but it might—along with the dominant Christian religion—serve as a cement to hold together something of our identity as a people.

Like America, medieval Burgundy was never a nation even in the most rudimentary sense, only a federation of principalities. The same could be said of 16th-century France, but the Bourbon rulers of France succeeded in constructing a unified state out of such disparate elements as Brittany, Provence, and Lorraine. The

only serious threat to this process was not posed by the “Frondeurs” who, in the minority of Louis XIV, attempted to reassert local and provincial authority, but by the religious division between Catholics and Protestants. Much has been written about the wisdom of Henry IV's Edict of Nantes, granting religious privileges to the Protestants, and it was probably a necessary move at the time. In the long run, however, France had to be one or the other, Catholic or Protestant. For proof, only look at the trouble caused by the Calvinizing Jansenists who remained within the Church.

For good and ill, France became not only a nation but “*la grande nation*” in a way that the United States can never be. At best, we could have hoped to be something like the Holy Roman Empire in the 18th century. Although it was divided by religion (Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist), the imperial core was German but with significant populations of Slavs, Magyars, and Italians. Despite the variety of dialects and faiths, Catholic Germanic Vienna defined the culture of the empire. Even when Hungarians were finally admitted to partnership in the “dual monarchy,” they were (at least in the cultural sense) a distinctly junior partner. Vienna, from the time of Haydn to the time of Krauss and Strauss, was a cultural capital enriched by the contributions of Czechs and Hungarians, Jews and Croats, but bound together by the Church and the emperor.

It is too late to revive, much less save, the old republic founded by the men of Virginia, New York, New England, and the Carolinas. They have gone, and the land has forgotten them. Their monuments and their memories are being desecrated by the vandals who have supplanted them. We do well to honor them and to denounce all those who defame them, but they and their world have vanished forever. If I could legislate the future development of America, it would be in the direction of a Habsburgian federation in which an Anglo-American Christian core defined a culture that made room for the contributions of the Central and Southern Europeans, Mexicans and Africans who have come—and continue to come—to live here. But this is probably as vain a dream as the dream of saving the Old Republic. So long as there is some remote possibility, if not of winning, then at least of saving something in our defeat, we should fight on for our cultural legacy.

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The Ballad of the Death-Row Lover *by William Baer*

One night at Church by the Jersey Shore,
the day the Lord was risen,
Sweet Lee explained how they could soothe
the souls in Rahway Prison.

"We'll write them letters," said eager Sweet Lee
(who really was rather plain),
and pretty Jen concurred and said,
"Death row's so inhumane!"

To Jen the notion of capital crime
was totally unfair,
and she opposed the needle, the noose,
and the sparking electric chair.

"Dear Whistling Jack, I hope you're well,
and hope you enjoy my note.
And, yes, I know you had a wife,
before you slit her throat."

Back and forth, the letters flew
from spring to summertime;
they fell in love, and Jen believed
he was innocent of his crime.

"But I'll never send my photo," she sighed,
"off to that terrible place.
I want him to love the 'me' within,
and not my pretty face."

Then the kindly judges of the Garden State
issued a proclamation:
"Whistling Jack, on a legal point,
goes back in the population."

But still Jen needed to test his love,
and she asked her friend Sweet Lee,
"Would you meet Jack at the prison gates,
and pretend that you are me?"

The day that Jack was finally released,
she waited by the phone,
which didn't ring, and didn't ring,
but left her all alone.

"We've fallen in love," Sweet Lee explained,
"and we won't be coming back."
Jen smashed the phone against the wall,
"Now let me speak to Jack."

"But I'm the one who wrote the letters!"
"Who cares?" her lover said.
"Besides, I've got a pretty face!"
"Who cares?" The line went dead.

She swooned a week, then opened the *Post*,
and read the Coroner's quote:
"Whistling Jack took his lover Miss Lee,
then slit her naked throat."

When the doorbell rang, she was in the kitchen,
praying her lunchtime grace.
When she opened the door, Jack smiled and said,
"My, what a pretty face!"

Jack stepped inside, eyed her up and down,
looking very impressed,
but she thumped him with her carving knife,
deep in his cheating chest.

There was blood on the rug, blood on the walls,
blood all over the place.
There was blood on her dress, and her shaking hands,
and blood on her pretty face.

And now that Jack's gone, she still won't condone
the taking of human life,
with needles, or nooses, or electric chairs,
just with the carving knife.

Remember the Texas Revolution

"Chicano Studies" departments at American universities portray the Battle of the Alamo as the triumph of the lawful rulers of Texas over a rowdy, drunken band of illegal aliens. Such a portrayal has a delicious irony to it, though it is mostly false. Almost always omitted from the Chicano version of events are several unsettling facts: Spain had established only a few settlements in Texas, and those few were clustered in a small portion of the province; the Americans were invited to settle in Texas because the Mexicans were scarcely holding their own against marauding Indians and the economy was stagnant; San Antonio, the provincial capitol, was a crude village of log and mud huts with no more than 800 people; there were only some 3,500 Mexicans in the whole of Texas, and, by 1830, Americans outnumbered them five to one; Santa Ana was despised by many, if not most, of the Mexicans in Texas.

In 1821, Moses Austin was granted 200,000 acres of land in Texas for a colony of Americans. Dying of pneumonia before he could take action, the venture was left in the hands of his son, Stephen, who got the grant increased to millions of acres and attracted Americans—first, by the dozens; then, by the hundreds—to the province. The Spanish governor of Texas, Antonio de Martinez, could not have been more pleased; he was now becoming governor of something more than an isolated, struggling, and crude frontier outpost.

With the success of the Mexican revolution, Austin was forced to travel to Mexico City to get his colony's title confirmed by the new Mexican government. In 1823, the Mexican congress not only confirmed his colonial grant but authorized individual grants to American settlers in acreage more generous than that requested by Austin. Settlers were required only to pay a small fee for registering title to the land, and taxes were waived for six years. Austin was granted 100,000 acres for his personal use and made civil commandant of the colony. By the end of 1824, Austin had settled several hundred families—the Old Three Hundred—on the land. They were anything but illegal and hardly rowdy drunks. Austin required written testi-

mony ensuring that a settler's "character is *perfectly unblemished*, that he is a moral and industrious man, and absolutely free from the vice of intoxication."

In 1825, the Mexican congress, now controlled by Federalists who favored decentralization, granted greater autonomy to the states, including allowing them to regulate immigration and colonization. Colonies of Americans in Texas now proliferated, until there were more than two dozen. The *empresarios*, those who received the grants (often millions of acres each), agreed to settle 100 to 800 families on the land within six years. By 1830, there were 16,000 Americans in Texas, while the Mexican population was not much more than 3,000. Austin's original colony alone had more than 4,000 American settlers. The American settlements were generally peaceful, law-abiding, and prosperous. By now, they were calling themselves Texians.

In 1826, Austin organized a volunteer force of mounted rangers to control the Indians, especially the Comanche. Instead of allowing the Indians to take the initiative, as the Mexicans had, the rangers penetrated deep into Indian country and put surprised warriors to flight. The rangers served as volunteers, supplying their own horses and firearms, and were only activated intermittently. Nonetheless, they changed the balance of power on the Texas frontier and expanded the area open to peaceful settlement, something neither the Spaniards nor the Mexicans had been able to do.

Meanwhile, government authorities in Mexico City grew increasingly ambivalent about the success of the American colonies in Texas: Although a thinly populated and poor frontier province was now booming, it was becoming Americanized. The new Centralist government under Anastacio Bustamante dispatched a general to investigate. He reported that only in San Antonio and its hinterland were Mexicans in the majority. East of San Antonio, Americans outnumbered Mexicans ten to one. Moreover, noted the general, the Americans were industrious, prosperous, and ambitious.

Bustamante decided to garrison Texas with soldiers recruited from Mexican



prisons who would remain in Texas as settlers after their terms of service. He also sharply reduced the autonomy of the states and declared an end to American immigration. Ironically, the first incident resulting from Bustamante's policy was precipitated by an American, John Bradburn, serving as a colonel in the Mexican army. Late in 1831, Kentucky-born Bradburn arrived to command a Mexican garrison on Galveston Bay. Within months, he had ordered American settlers in the nearby community of Liberty off their land, declared martial law, and arrested several protesting Americans. When the Texians grabbed their Kentucky rifles and began a march on the garrison, they were attacked by Mexican troops. Ten of the Americans were killed before the settlers regrouped, killed five of the soldiers, and put the others to flight, most dropping their arms for a swifter escape. Although not understood at the time, the first shots of the Texas Revolution had been fired.

Bustamante would not be around to deal with the Texians. In January 1833, he was driven from office by Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana. Texians at first rejoiced, believing that the Federalist Santa Ana would restore the states' rights abolished by Bustamante. Instead, Santa Ana dismantled the Federalist program, tore up the Mexican constitution, and ruled dictatorially. Santa Ana had Austin arrested, taken to Mexico City, and put in solitary confinement. Perhaps to mollify the Texians, Santa Ana allowed the resumption of American immigration. When he finally arrived in Texas with his army in 1836, Santa Ana faced, for the most part, not illegal aliens but Americans who had been invited into Texas and granted land to build an economy and pacify the frontier for Mexico. The Americans had done just that before a dictator in Mexico City decided to abolish their rights.

Blindsided by Education's Leftists

Republicans Assure Their Own Marginalization

by B.K. Eakman

Michael Moore, the leftist director of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, got one thing right when he proclaimed at a June 24 press conference that, despite the Republican control of the White House and Congress, America is liberal. It is a fact. The Republican Party, the only home conservatives have at election time, does not remotely resemble the GOP of Reagan or Goldwater or Nixon or Eisenhower.

Much of the blame can be laid at the feet of conservative "leaders," who continue to shoot themselves in the foot on every issue—environmental extremism, abortion, limited government, crime—because, for 40 years, American public schools have been indoctrinating each class of new high-school graduates in leftism.

Many true conservatives were disheartened when Ronald Reagan (and, later, the Newt Gingrich-led "Contract With America") failed to follow through on campaign promises to shut down the U.S. Department of Education—a creation that everyone knew was a sop to the National Education Association (NEA) in 1976 by then-Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter. Today, conservatives continue to be stumped over the reticence of legislators that they elected, in the name of stopping communism and socialism, to take on America's left-leaning education system—not only for the sake of nation, but for the sake of the Republican Party itself. Increasingly, serious conservatives are looking at third-party options—or just not voting at all.

At least three of President Reagan's senior advisors in the Department of Education warned him about the escalation of left-leaning schools. But neither his appointed education secretary, William Bennett, nor Mr. Bennett's deputies were moved to do anything with the information.

Among the items these advisors presented was a laundry list of left-leaning foundations, think tanks, and university researchers to which the Department of Education was awarding grants that funded unsound methodologies, controversial programs, and countercultural curricula. They uncovered plans written by top officials inside the department's own research arm, the National Institute of Education, to redirect American schools away from excellence toward mere functionality, and they confirmed links between certain federally "validated" curricula and the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Indeed, two of President Reagan's own children, Patti and Ron, were testaments in the 1980's to the damage inflicted by Marxist educators. The pair noisily rejected both their father and traditional American values—and still do.

I was a young, just-married teacher in Orange County, Cali-

fornia, when Ronald Reagan was governor. Having attended a rigorous private academy in Washington, D.C., for most of my life, I was appalled to discover that, in the time it had taken me to complete college, schools were turning out not merely eighth graders two or three years behind private schools, as before, but youngsters, just ten years my junior, who could not read, spell, or do simple arithmetic. Nothing in my university teacher-training courses prepared me for the deterioration in learning and conduct I discovered at Johnson Intermediate School in Westminster, California—a middle school not much different from others around the nation.

I seemed to be the only one in my district giving essay assignments; most teachers were handing out social-adjustment games. There was pressure to hire younger, supposedly "hip" teachers (like me) and to force older, tougher teachers into retirement by saddling them with the worst-behaved classes.

For me, the final two straws came, first, when the dress codes were scrapped and, secondly, when the NEA launched its campaign to hoodwink teachers into joining its soon-to-be consolidated local, state, and national unions, which had previously been separate and voluntary. Suddenly, our classrooms were filled with backward baseball caps and gross-out T-shirts that made our jobs even harder. Then, when we got to the teachers' lounge, our mailboxes were stuffed with union leaflets condemning administrators, parents, and state policymakers for low salaries and poor benefits.

I was naive, of course. The money did not look so bad to me. I would have done worse accepting an entry-level position in journalism or technical writing. It bothered me that the NEA was not advocating backup in the office for disciplinary problems or lobbying against relaxed standards of behavior, which, by that time, included cursing, vandalizing desks, spitting on the floor, and talking back to teachers. The union did not condemn social promotion, or the excess of drug-and-sex programs, or even the absence of clear-cut benchmarks for each grade level.

If our "professional organization" really had wanted to do something for us, I thought, salaries and benefits were the least of our problems. Union leaders denounced tests of all kinds, calling them "humiliating." They criticized workbooks and drills as "boring" and advocated chaotic "open classrooms." The NEA upheld the doctrine of "moral equivalency" between communist and Christian values, supported the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, and favored socialist economic policies over free-market principles.

In frustration, I wrote a letter to Governor Reagan, explaining the situation as I saw it and describing just how many of the "special activities" and "supplementary curriculums," in particular, were built around anti-American themes. I revealed how some of us who did not buy in to the union-led rhetoric were seeking out alternate curriculum repositories outside the district just to

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find suitable materials from which to teach. Often, this meant resurrecting older texts, some of them stamped “obsolete.”

My comments to Governor Reagan must have struck a nerve. I received a wonderful, hand-written response (which I eventually lost—who knew that he would one day be President and that the letter would be a collector’s item?). He commiserated, theorizing that the Marxist-inspired student demonstrations in the universities were filtering down into elementary and secondary classrooms. He wrote that he was forwarding a copy of my letter to Max Rafferty, then California’s superintendent of instruction, with a directive to look into my allegations and get back to him with suggestions.

In due course, I received a personal response from Max Rafferty. It was no form letter, either. Mr. Rafferty was particularly concerned about forced unionization.

Despite the lack of a positive outcome, both Ronald Reagan and Max Rafferty appeared to be sincere. What I do not think they recognized—nor did I, at the time—was that local, state, and federal agencies had already been outmaneuvered. The two teacher unions (the NEA and the AFT) had a certain amount of influence with teachers and administrators, of course, but they were not necessarily calling the shots.

Tax-exempt foundations such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teachers (CFAT) were giving the marching orders—and not just to the teachers’ unions. CFAT was carefully inserting politically acceptable individuals into state education agencies and the federal bureaucracy—such entities as the Education Commission of the States and the old Office of Education, when it was still under the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

CFAT also was raking in millions of dollars from its for-profit spin-off, the Educational Testing Service (ETS). ETS was constructing most of the testing instruments in the United States—and beginning to incorporate psychological and opinion-oriented items. Several of ETS’s presidents, such as Ralph Tyler, were sitting as commissioners of the Office of Education, which should have been seen as a conflict of interest. Tyler was also busy creating tests for state after state under separate contracts and helping to formulate what would become the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Since 1947, when UNESCO was launched—with two grants, one each from the NEA and CFAT—the liberal-leftists understood the stakes in institutionalizing a Marxist-based education system. They knew even from the beginning of the European counterculture movement that schools were their ace-in-the-hole, assuring the *overall* success of Marxist socialism, whatever temporary political setbacks might occur from one administration to another in the free world.

Toward that end, UNESCO was able to weave a web across Europe and the United States of highly placed associates to serve as “agents of influence.” The term morphed into “agents of change,” then “agents of social change,” and, finally, just “change agents.”

By contrast, traditionalists, since World War II, were busy playing catch-up. They started about 15 years too late. They failed to anticipate the menace that Marxism posed as far back as the Allies’ march to Berlin at the close of World War II, when Gen. George S. Patton was told to wait until the Soviets could meet us and go in together.

Despite attempts by the House Committee on Un-American Activities to turn public opinion against communism, the cult

of celebrity greatly influenced the young. The education establishment increasingly called upon left-leaning stars to speak on behalf of various initiatives, such as antidrug programs. The fact that many, even most, of these celebrities were wolfing down recreational drugs, condemning American policy abroad, and being notoriously promiscuous failed to hurt their credibility because the media had already idolized them.



In 1958, California’s Senate Investigating Committee on Education convened hearings on Marxist propagandizing in the schools. The Sixteenth Investigating Committee Report on Education quotes portions of teachers’ guides, elementary- and secondary-school curricula, and teacher-training texts, revealing an obvious Marxist slant. Yet, the propagandizing continued.

Erich Fromm, author of *Escape From Freedom*, for example, was lauded in teacher-training classes as an outstanding contributor to modern educational theories—including at the university I attended. It was he who coined the term *authoritarian aggressors* to describe the defenders of traditional norms. His theories form the roots of today’s self-esteem movement.

Max Horkheimer echoed Fromm’s wisdom in his book *Studies on Authority and the Family*. The family, he wrote, “produces the attitudes which predispose men for blind submission”—the implication being that families were incubators of Nazism.

This is the kind of pap that still passes for teacher training. Mr. Reagan, his Department of Education appointees, and most leaders of conservative think tanks failed to examine such materials, so they could not comprehend the appeal of Marxism to young, college-age students preparing for careers in teaching.

In 1958, Mr. Reagan was just becoming aware of the scope of Marxist influence within his own profession; he had not set his sights on the governor’s mansion, much less the White House. There is an even chance that he never read the text of California’s hearings.

The United States, of course, remained distracted with various crises and issues. Education simply was not a national priority—until the launching of *Sputnik*, when legislators suddenly realized what most parents had already noticed: that the level of hard knowledge was dropping precipitously. Our communist adversaries inflicted damage that went considerably beyond the scrapping of substantive learning, however. Marxist professors and bureaucrats, who began swelling the ranks of the profession, made it their mission to set in place policies that would create a “Lord of the Flies” subculture. By the mid-60’s, it would be dubbed a “generation gap.” This subculture was endowed with

power—and money—and, by 1968, when I started to teach, cultural Marxism was trumping any serious effort to transmit knowledge to America's youth.

Ronald Reagan was blindsided by his fixation on the Soviet Union. Like many of his colleagues, including Max Rafferty, he thought that, if the Soviet Union could just be made to break apart, the Marxist underpinnings would fall with it—in the schools, in the media, in the motion-picture industry. It would all turn around once everyone could plainly see that Soviet communism had failed.

This proved to be a miscalculation.

Of course, President Reagan had more on his plate than stopping the Soviet arms buildup. He also wanted to curtail stagflation and double-digit inflation, inherited from Democrat Jimmy Carter, and rekindle respect for America worldwide. *However, the extent to which cultural Marxist and socialist economic principles had already become institutionalized in the American psyche eluded him.*

Failure to teach and instill free-market concepts has produced a large egalitarian faction that believes socialist systems fall short only when legislation fails to give everyone an equal share of the pie. That someone must first *create* a pie escapes their logic. Economic prosperity requires unleashing the creative energies of enterprising people through the profit motive, but collegiates unschooled in free-market principles viewed pie-making as government's job.

The schools also produced a plethora of amoral elitists who found the strictures of civilized society confining. Even ideals of honor, decency and integrity were rejected in favor of "self-actualization," a me-first mentality.

President Reagan was a rarity in Tinseltown. He never forgot who he was or his humble beginnings. He was, by all reports, a good man. "I believe that man is essentially good," he said, and "that good eventually triumphs over evil." While good may indeed triumph, President Reagan's enthusiasm for such an outcome in the short term may have blinded him to the perverse staying power of cultural Marxism and economic socialism—even with a defunct Soviet Union.

He was not alone. Today, education is the stuff of photo-opportunities—Presidents and their wives sitting among minority children, making nice. Band-aids like Head Start and testing are hopelessly outweighed by the lack of real teaching skills, leftist propagandizing, and classroom chaos.

By the 1990's, the left went "back to basics." It realized it had to divert attention from its endgame. It proceeded under the rubric of "mental health." Dr. John Rawlings Rees had pointed the way in a 1947 address to the National Council for Mental Hygiene: "We must aim to make [psychology] permeate every educational activity in our national life. . . . [W]e have [already] made a useful attack on a number of professions. The two easiest of them naturally are the teaching profession and the Church. . . . I think we must imitate the Totalitarians and organize some kind of fifth column activity."

An early guru of the mental-health movement, Dr. Paul Popenoe, put it another way: "The school should be a sieve through which all the children of the country are passed. . . . It is very desirable that no child escape inspection."

Having set in motion the contempt for authority that eventually gave us Columbine, the left started launching programs ostensibly aimed at "prevention"—i.e., screening for troubled youth—masking its agenda of inspecting for political correct-

ness. The strategy combined the burgeoning new field of computerized cross-matching with psychological profiling. The inauguration of Dr. Rees's proposal could not have been timed better. Conservatives, at this point largely marginalized by the media, were completely blindsided.

George W. Bush, like his father, knew America's education system was in trouble. He thought that, if only he could mandate testing in reading and math, he would force the hand of "progressive" educators. They would have no choice but to re-establish standards. In that rationale, he made three errors. First, he was convinced by his neoconservative allies that tests were, well, actually tests. The term *assessment* was lost on both Bush presidencies, in particular the fact that assessments measured opinions more than academics. Secondly, even the few standards that emerged (such as the Standards of Learning in Virginia and the Profiles of Learning in Minnesota) were initiated more as a way to force teachers to bring minority children from lower-income families up to the mediocre level of their middle-class peers. Of course, no such thing occurred. Standards soon had to be lowered across the board to avoid a political backlash.

George W. Bush also inherited his father's bias toward the United Nations, which had helped to establish the elder Mr. Bush's credibility on the world stage. Even though the United Nations thumbed its nose at the President's War on Terror, he reendorsed UNESCO, undermining any chance he might have had to improve America's schools.

Even the most prestigious conservative think tanks and advisory organizations do not seem to understand that the interests of the Republican Party are not being served when schools are turning out little socialists year after year. They somehow expect that curricula which denigrate self-reliance and individualism, play down national sovereignty, scoff at the existence of a Creator, and advocate socialist solutions to healthcare and unemployment are going to produce conservative Republicans.

Exactly how is teacher preparation that is geared to promote Marxist ideals supposed to energize the electorate to vote Republican? Or advance traditional values? The questions conservative organizations and think tanks should be asking are: How can we remove the red tape so that private-school startup costs are lessened, thereby providing more supply to meet the demand? What are the "breakthrough" methodologies that would revolutionize, without stigma, the teaching of basic subjects? Can we support these techniques through the universities—instead of writing each state a blank check? How can we penalize the teachers' unions so that they cannot masquerade as "professional associations"?

In the end, axing the U.S. Department of Education became a no-go, while dozens of vested interests helped sustain a *quid pro quo* between the department and agencies of the left—all committed to Marxist socialism.

Conservatives will continue to redouble their efforts while missing their aim as long as they refuse to take on the education behemoth. How long before young graduates are no longer schooled well enough in the principles of liberty to bother defending them?

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There's No Place Like Home

Simon Says, "Go to School"

by Michael McMahon



Every school has a playground for its pupils; English schools provide a playground for politicians, too. Children seek security, regularity, and continuity: The games they play in the schoolyard observe rules that do not change. Change, though, is the contemporary politician's reason for existence: He seeks not to hold fast to that which is good but to run fast to something he fancies will be better. And he wants to make everyone else run fast, too. For the here-today-gone-the-day-after-tomorrow politician, the all-change game offers excitement, but the children that are forced to play it every day are bored. "Simon Says" is no fun if the same person always plays Simon and prefaces his every instruction with "Simon says."

The self-contradiction of Simon's sayings to the last several generations of British schoolchildren is reflected in the constant rebranding of what used to be known as the Department of Education. The first change came under Margaret Thatcher, when it became the Department of Education and Science, in which the "Science" that was thus celebrated was not theoretical but applied, and applied to the development of national wealth. Later, it became the Department of Education and Employment, in which the "and" really meant "for." Then, the word "for" was slipped into the title, but in a different place, when our schools found themselves lorded over by a Department for Education and Employment—though, by then, by any orthodox definition of *education*, the department was clearly agin it.

Now, the legion-named ministry styles itself the Department for Education and Skills, the DfES. The change originally demonstrated the government's belief that education is a comprehensive continuum in which manual and intellectual dexterities are equally valued, because the national workforce needs both, and education exists to prepare people for work.

However, the government has come up against a problem. The prospect of birth, school, employment, and death (interspersed with plasma-screened TV reality shows and package holidays to Disneyland) is interrupted for many by an inability to engage with the system. They do not have what it takes to integrate with what today passes for schooling, or with what today passes for society. And they do not have it because their parents do not have it, either.

The real skills shortage in Britain today is not a lack of plumbers, computer programmers, or town planners: The skill in really short supply is parenting. Having offered education to the nation as the solution to all her problems, the government has found that one of the deepest national difficulties is that many children cannot engage with it, because their parents are unable to offer them the encouragement, guidance, or support they need to make something of themselves at school—or even, in many cases, to get there with anything approaching regularity. Inadequacy thus begets inadequacy, and the sins—and omissions—of the parents are visited upon the children and on the neighbors that their selfish behavior disturbs.

In deprived areas all over the country, promised school improvements have been stalling because of the intractability of dysfunctional children, and the government has been forced to acknowledge what it had so long denied: that poor results do not necessarily indicate poor teaching, and that poorly parented children can sometimes be impossible to teach. The drive for higher examination results is still on, but now, a new strategy employed to achieve them is to put pressure on mothers (and fathers, where known and present) to play their part. One of the "skills" that the education department finds itself responsible for is parenting, and its approach to raising standards here is even more heavy-handed than it was when the party line was to blame the teachers.

Fixed-penalty fines have been introduced for the parents of

Michael McMahon writes from Norfolk, England.



children who miss school, and, last June, the first 40 tickets were issued by local education authorities. The Department for Education and Skills was quick to congratulate them. The legislation providing for this punishment is contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, which provides for a £50 fine—for each parent, should there be two. If the fine is not paid after 28 days, it is doubled; after 42 days, imprisonment can follow. People whose peace has been disturbed or whose property has been vandalized or stolen by inner-city truants on the rampage will welcome these new powers, but even the most ardent advocate of good order and discipline would do well to hesitate before filling his lungs for a second cheer. More often than not, the people that will be fined will not be bad but inadequate, and more deserving of pity than punishment.

Consider the case of Patricia Amos, a divorced, impoverished, drug-befuddled middle-aged mother of five severely fathered children, who was sentenced to 60 days in prison in 2002 for failing to get the youngest of them to school. Then, the government rejoiced that Providence should have supplied them with such a perfect example to be bundled down their new fast track to prison for the parents of truants. Mrs. Amos publicly repented and promised to exercise her duty; her daughters were invited to speak on the wireless of their resolve never to put their mother through such an ordeal again; and one of them even went on to win an academic prize at school. “The message is clear,” education minister Evan Lewis told the BBC in July 2003: “prosecution works.”

He spoke too soon, however. In March 2004, Mrs. Amos was sentenced again, for a repeat offence. Prison had punished her—and her children—but, in matters of parenting or motherhood, she left it no more educated or skilled. “It was obvious that the policy of jailing struggling parents was nothing more than an empty political gesture,” said Claire McCarthy from the Howard League for Penal Reform. “Now we have the proof that it was completely unsuccessful. Patricia Amos’ greatest crime was to be a socially excluded woman in Blunkett’s Britain. Her imprisonment is a waste of tax-payers money.”

Many at the Department for Education and Skills would probably beg to differ. Locking up a parent for inadequacy might not be a good example of justice, but is a perfect example of a punishment imposed *pour encourager les autres*. The treatment of Mrs. Amos is remarkable for its lack of humanity, but a more recent truancy case elevates the desire to be seen to punish above even the most rudimentary appreciation of cause and effect. Under English law, a child’s parents may

seek a school’s permission for up to ten days’ absence for a holiday. Last spring, eight-year-old Victoria Corry received a good attendance award from Crumpsall Lane Primary school in northern Manchester. Shortly afterward, her parents wrote to the head teacher to tell him that they would be taking her on holiday for 11 days. He wrote back to say that a break of more than ten days could not be permitted and warned them that their daughter would be removed from the school roll if she was absent for any longer. They took the holiday in any case and returned to find that she had been expelled. She missed a further six days of lessons while her parents negotiated with the school for her readmission.

The Corry case is not a story of poor parenting, but of half-witted headmastering. Heads have been forced to play “Simon Says” with the government, too, and their eyes are as glazed over as those of any other player. Victoria’s head teacher’s original decision was not supported by those above him in the national chain of command. A spokesman for Manchester City Council said: “We have been in close discussion with the school over this issue and are very pleased that this pupil is now back in school.” Taking a child off the school roll is a “very serious matter,” said the DfES; they would expect a school to take advice from their local education authority before going down that route. Each response conveyed an unspoken rebuke. When the BBC asked Victoria’s head teacher for comment, he said that he was only trying to do what the government wanted and expressed the hope that it should offer schools, parents, governing bodies, and local education authorities “better guidance.” He did not ask that they should be allowed to exercise common sense.

Had he done so, he just might have received an unexpected answer, for there are signs that the mood in the DfES is changing. The hawks still grab the headlines, as hawks do. It still serves the government’s purpose to celebrate the punishment of people like poor Mrs. Amos. But the government has set itself targets that it now knows it cannot meet through hawkishness alone. Teachers in safe, middle-class schools have been bullied into training their pupils to turn out the statistical results that the government demands; their children are no better educated, but they can jump through the required number of limply held hoops. In many poorer areas, all the imaginable threats have been tried, and they have failed. There, teachers’ careers have been ruined and their mental or physical health broken in efforts to keep dysfunctional children dancing to the government’s miserable, measurable tune. Nasty has not got the politicians the results they need to prove that they have re-educated the nation; now, Simon says, “Try nice.”

This is, of course, good news—up to a point. The government is still more concerned to make children meet targets than to educate them; it has not learned that, in education, as in life, what matters most cannot be measured. But it has been forced to acknowledge that telling schools that social deprivation is an unacceptable explanation for poor performance is not true. The mistake is not openly admitted. Letters of apology have not been sent to heads and teachers ruined by being ordered to achieve the impossible. Ministers have not made speeches begging the forgiveness of those whose careers their brittle policies have wrecked. They have, however, stopped making speeches claiming that the only reason that their targets are not met by poor children is that they are poorly taught.

Moreover, they have introduced a new kind of flexible school structure in an attempt to equip underclass children with the

support they need to engage properly with contemporary education. (Contemporary English education is not wonderful, but it is better than no education at all.) The so-called extended school seeks to address the needs of the whole child by providing health, education, and social services under the same roof. These can include anything from breakfast or homework clubs to clinics for eating disorders and alcohol, smoking, and drug addiction, classes in self-esteem and anger control, and drop-in centers for those suffering from bullying or stress. At present, 60 such schools are being tested and developed, and the government has promised that there will be 240 of them by 2006.

Creating such schools on such a scale is an acknowledgment that damaged children make poor learners, and such an acknowledgement is long overdue. Many young people find life itself a full-time struggle, even without the demands of school. I can say this with confidence because I have met many such youngsters myself. I taught in a tough inner-city secondary school until a few years ago, and, toward the end of my time there, I spent six months as the school's counselor, a confidential advisor offering help to youngsters with whatever problems they might choose to share. That short turn of duty gave me an insight into their lives that few teachers enjoy. When I learned what many of those teenagers had to put up with, I began to understand why they found it almost impossible to engage with school.

Numerous youngsters confided in me that they were the victims of sustained sexual or physical abuse. Girls told me that they had been raped by their mothers' current and previous boyfriends; one boy, that he always missed afternoon school in order to stop his father, who frequently came home in a drunken rage, from beating up his mother. I learned from a girl who was punished for arriving at school late that she could

never leave the house until she had procured the morning "fix" for her mother; one day, she arrived even later than usual, having found her mother dead on the sitting-room floor. She came to school because she had nowhere else to go. Another addicts' child missed school when her parents had no money to buy food, for they had spent it all on drugs: The only way she could fend off the pangs of hunger was by staying in bed. One girl disclosed to me that she always carried a carving knife in her satchel; she was terrified of being assaulted by her father, whom she feared might spring upon her at any time of the day or night. I learned of vicious, secret bullying in and out of school and of family feuds that often exploded into violence in the corridors.

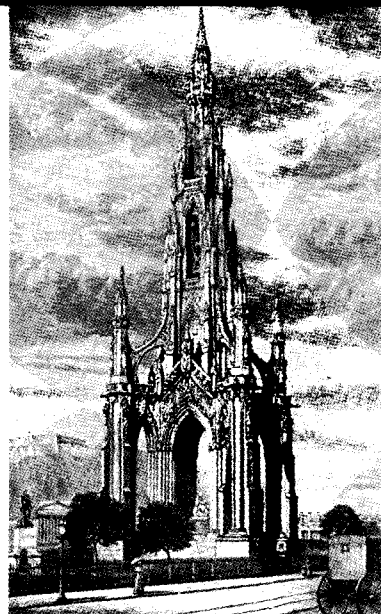
Every day, I heard such things and more; every day, I better understood what those damaged children lacked: a stable and loving family that offers a sense of security and support. In the run-down housing estates served by that school, family life amounted to little more than conjugal anarchy, with a single mother as its only fixed point. Early marriages or partnerships fell apart, and a succession of live-in boyfriends would follow. These would usually show little interest in the children of the original relationship; sometimes, they would show rather too much. Fearful of losing the man in their life, mothers frequently turned a blind eye to abuse.

Fragmented family arrangements like this do not provide springboards for any kind of academic success, and the government's "extended schools" initiative is an attempt to help parents hold things together so that their children can engage with the educational process. Extended schools thus offer as much support for parents as for their children, providing classes in parenting and behavior management. Such skills used to be learned in the family, and, until they are taught there again, society will continue to fragment.

Walter Scott *Versus* the Scottish Enlightenment

(Edinburgh, May/June 2005)

Scholars on the right blame the Enlightenment for the social and political ills that plague our own times. In the eyes of these same critics, however, the Scottish Enlightenment of David Hume and Adam Smith merits praise for a less radical approach to questions of personal liberty and for an enthusiasm for free markets. Is this a reasonable analysis of the two Enlightenments? At least one man did not think so: Sir Walter Scott, whose body of work, including a remarkable biography of Napoleon, was a reaction to the French and Scottish Enlightenments. The Convivium will include a special lecture on Robert Louis Stevenson, sightseeing in the city that he described as "what Paris was meant to be," and a few days spent exploring the Scottish Highlands. Guest faculty will include Emory University professor of philosophy Donald Livingston, a scholar of David Hume.



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Many Children Left Behind

Reexamining the Texas Success Story

by William Lutz

“No Child Left Behind”: That poll-tested slogan is the centerpiece of an artfully designed, meticulously implemented p.r. campaign designed to portray Texas as a hotbed of educational reform and achievement.

Certainly, the Texas accountability system has put some focus on teaching basic literacy skills to low-income children who may have been ignored in decades past. However, it also ranks schools based mainly on the rates at which students (both whites and minorities) pass a single standardized test.

This feature of the Texas system, which has provoked the most controversy, is the basis of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Politicians and some in the Texas education bureaucracy have worked overtime to convince the nation that their accountability system, enacted in 1993, has improved student achievement and closed the academic gap between racial minorities and whites.

There is another story, however—one that many Texans, particularly those with children in the public schools, know—that is little told outside the Lone Star State. It is a story of education policy based not on helping all children learn but on creating headlines about a “miracle” in Texas education. It is a story of students doing multiple-choice testing drills instead of reading Shakespeare.

George Orwell would have understood what has happened here. In the name of raising standards, academic standards have been lowered. Educational programs described as “more rigorous” replace academic rigor with an emphasis on “creativity” and “critical-thinking skills.” Efforts to improve “local control” result in the concentration of power in the hands of an appointed commissioner of education, at the expense of an elected State Board of Education.

The best example of codifying lowered standards in the name of raising them occurred in 1997, when the State Board of Education rewrote the state’s curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). By law, all schools must teach the curriculum, and all textbooks and state standardized tests must conform to it. Former education commissioner Lionel “Skip” Meno, who served under Gov. Ann Richards, started the process by appointing teams from the education profession (along with a few noneducators) to study and propose revisions to the state’s curriculum. Each subject area had its own writing team. The process continued under the administration of Gov. George W. Bush and his education commissioner, Mike Moses.

When the TEKS writing teams issued their report, a firestorm erupted. Conservative members of the State Board of Education, parents, and some concerned teachers lambasted

the document as vague and lacking in academic content. They argued that the TEKS standards were so general that it was impossible to measure whether students were getting a good education. Additionally, identical skills often appear under several grade levels.

A group of high-school English teachers developed the Texas Alternative Document (TAD), an alternative to TEKS, emphasizing phonics for teaching reading in the early grades. TAD is generally more precise than TEKS, specifying exactly what students in each grade level should be able to do.

In sixth-grade English-Language Arts, for example, TEKS directs students to “use verb tenses appropriately and consistently such as present, past, future, perfect, and progressive.” By contrast, TAD expects students to

form the present progressive, past progressive, future progressive, present emphatic, and past emphatic verb tenses. Locate the entire verb phrase including modals (verbs that fall under no tense name) (e.g., those that begin with “must,” “can,” “could,” “may,” “might,” [plus] the main verb), locate all types of linking verb phrases (e.g., forms which come from “to be,” “to look,” “to smell,” “to sound,” “to feel,” “to taste”) and those which show condition or state of being . . .

After the outcry, Bush and Moses made a few improvements to TEKS. (Some pro-phonics language was added to the English-Language Arts TEKS, for example.) The Bush administration, however, put substantial pressure on all Republicans to support the revised draft of TEKS. When 6 conservative Republican members of the 15-member State Board of Education held out for higher standards, many in the education establishment tried to portray the opposition to TEKS, and the effort to adopt a high-standards curriculum in its place, as coming from the “religious right.” Conservative State Board of Education members faced challenges by fellow Republicans in the primary.

Relations between most of the Republicans on the State Board of Education and Moses were downright icy. Things got so bad that two Republican State Board of Education members—Bob Offutt and Donna Ballard—went to New Hampshire in 2000 to endorse Steve Forbes for president.

After the trip to New Hampshire, Americans for Job Security—a political-action committee founded by executives of the American Insurance Association but no longer associated with the group—spent tens of thousands of dollars on a massive direct-mail campaign attacking Offutt, who was seeking reelection at the time. The mailers accused Offutt of opposing reforms, advanced by Governor Bush, that had raised test scores in Texas public schools. (Ballard had left the board by 2000.) The names of donors to the Americans for Job Security’s mail-

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ers were never disclosed, and Offutt was defeated. This is but one of many examples of how some of the major Republican and corporate campaign donors helped obstruct the cause of true education reform in Texas.

The adoption of TEKS, combined with a 1995 rewrite of the Texas Education Code, introduced some questionable fads to Texas classrooms. In 1995, the state legislature made it much more difficult for the elected State Board of Education to reject textbooks: Any error-free book meeting half of the TEKS standards had to be adopted.

One result of this new policy was the introduction into some Texas classrooms of mathematics textbooks emphasizing critical-thinking skills and creativity over computation and correct answers. Both the Austin and the Plano (a suburb of Dallas) independent school districts adopted one of these textbooks, *Connected Math*, for all middle schools. In Plano, a group of outraged parents organized and even sued the school to try to get the district to offer a traditional alternative to *Connected Math*. The courts did not stop the introduction of *Connected Math* or order an alternative, but they did rule that the school district violated parents' free-speech rights by preventing them from passing out literature critical of the text at parent meetings.

Keeping TEKS vague was an essential part of Team Bush's p.r. strategy. If the TEKS standards are grade-level specific and demanding, the state's standardized tests will be more difficult, and more children will fail. If they are vague and repetitive, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has the freedom to make the test easier, meaning that more children are likely to pass. The latter course ensures a steady stream of headlines that read "Educational Improvement in Texas."

The other critical decision concerned the design of the state's standardized test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Once again, a battle ensued between conservative State Board of Education members and the commissioner's office over whether Texas would favor high standards or—in pursuit of happy headlines—keep the test so easy that most children will pass.

State Board Member Richard Neill (R-Fort Worth) raised criticisms to TEA staff about some of the questions. He gave as one example a question on the end-of-course U.S. history exam. "There is an outline of the United States. It's divided up into four sections, and there's a fifth section for Alaska and Hawaii. And it says give the number of the section that has the most islands in it. All you have to do is count up the Hawaiian Islands. You don't even have to know what Hawaii [and] Alaska are."

Another subject of controversy was the Texas Education Agency's practice of "statistical equating." During the presidential election, Bush campaign officials talked in glowing terms about increasing the passing rates of Texas public-school students. What they did not tell voters was that the TEA often lowered the number of correct answers needed to pass the test during Bush's term of office. In order to pass the TAAS, students must achieve a Texas Learning Index of 70. The number of correct answers required to get that score varies based on TEA estimates of the difficulty of the test. (The TEA uses field-test data to judge the difficulty of the test.)

This policy meant that students did not have to get many questions right in order to pass the test—particularly in the years leading up to the presidential election. On the 2000 exit-level mathematics test (tenth grade), students could get fewer than half the questions right and still pass.

Politicians of both parties noted that, while passing rates on the TAAS improved substantially, scores on college entrance examinations (the SAT and the ACT) remained flat throughout the 1990's. Texas scores on the SAT went from an average of 490 verbal and 498 math in 1993 to 493 verbal and 500 math in 2003. Between 1998 and 2003, average scores actually went down. Defenders of the Texas system note that, for a state of its size, Texas tests a large portion of its students and that Texas has a high proportion of low-income and minority students. (These are usually the same people who decry "the soft bigotry of low expectations.")

In Austin, school-district officials were caught changing the student ID number on some answer sheets so that the exam would not count.

In Houston, teachers were caught erasing wrong answers and filling in right ones.

Additionally, until recently, Texas required enrollees at its universities to take a state exam to determine whether they needed remedial education. In 1997, only 48.2 percent of high-school students graduating with "advanced honors" and enrolling at state-run colleges either passed the test on the first attempt or were exempted from it because of high SAT and ACT scores. Only 26 percent of the remaining students passed or were exempted.

Perhaps the sharpest critique of the TAAS came in November 1998, when the Tax Research Association of Houston and Harris County presented a report on the test. The group invited Mathematically Correct, a California group advocating traditional standards in mathematics, to evaluate the math section of the TAAS. The group opposes "fuzzy" methods of teaching mathematics that emphasize "critical-thinking skills" and collaboration over correct answers and learning how to solve algebraic equations.

Mathematically Correct found TAAS wanting in many areas. Most notably, the group argued that the exit-level test—administered to high-school sophomores as a graduation requirement—tested at a sixth-grade level in mathematics. The group also found that the end-of-course test given to high-school students completing Algebra I contained mostly pre-algebra content.

The response from the Bush administration came fast and furious. An associate commissioner and the communications director of the TEA flew down and attended the news conference where the report was presented. Moses told reporters that the presenters of the report were not testing experts.

Despite the politically driven spin control, Moses understood Bush was vulnerable on this issue. In 1999, the legislature passed—at Moses' request—Senate Bill 103, which revamped the Texas testing system. The state tested more subjects and more grades. After Bush left office, the state implemented

a somewhat more rigorous testing program, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Once the state made the test more difficult, scores plummeted in Texas middle and high schools, though the elementary-reading passing rates remained respectable. The Texas Education Agency finally labeled the TAAS passing rate as “minimum expectations.”

According to TAKS statistics collected in the spring of 2003, just 51 percent achieved the score in eighth-grade mathematics recommended by the Texas Education Agency’s panel of stakeholders, compared with 92 percent who achieved minimum expectations on the TAAS. For students with limited English proficiency, only 15 percent achieved the panel-recommended standard, compared with 71 percent on the TAAS. Similarly low scores were found for other minority groups, which clear-

ly demonstrates that the gap between white and minority test scores has not yet been closed. In the 2004 testing cycle, these numbers improved slightly to 57 percent, meeting the panel’s standard in eighth-grade mathematics (28 out of 50 questions — or 56 percent right), and 20 percent of students with limited English proficiency meeting the standard. In general, passing rates decrease in the higher grades.

The single-minded focus on standardized testing found in the Texas Accountability System also resulted in some highly publicized cheating incidents, most notably in two of the state’s largest districts — Austin and Houston. In Austin, the school district and several administrators were indicted for tampering with the test. Specifically, some school officials were caught changing the student ID number on some answer sheets so that the exam would not count. In Houston, teachers were caught erasing wrong answers and filling in right ones.

Another running scandal in the Texas education system is the reporting of dropouts. The state had often bragged that it had an annual dropout rate of less than five percent. Civil-rights groups in Texas did not believe these numbers. The Intercultural Development Research Association took the number entering ninth grade, compared it with the number of twelfth graders earning high-school diplomas four years later. IDRA found attrition rates of more than 30 percent. Because of IDRA’s work, the state legislature has since changed the dropout rate used in the state accountability system, and the federal No Child Left Behind Act does not take annual dropout rates into account.

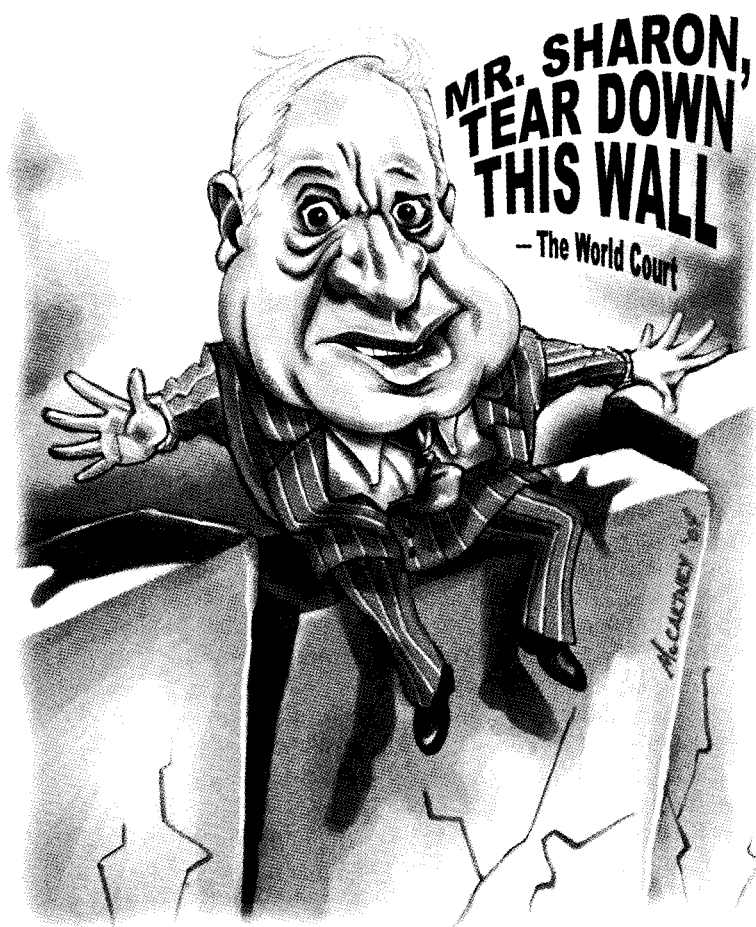
What can the rest of the nation learn from the Texas experience? Simple. Testing students, in and of itself, will not solve the nation’s education problems. (Nor will more money: In the 1990’s and 2001, Texas passed several pay raises for teachers and increases in education funding.)

This is not to say that meaningful testing or accountability is bad, *per se*. On the contrary, rigorous, high-standards tests are used throughout the world. As a Texas-style accountability system is implemented nationwide, however, voters should avoid taking headlines about “rising test scores” at face value. It is critical to ask whether the test actually reflects what students are expected to know.

I do not mean to imply that some gains and improvements did not occur in Texas schools during the 1990’s. Thanks to the outcry from conservatives on the State Board of Education, phonics received more emphasis in the early grades. The state authorized charter schools. And, while the Texas accountability system is not perfect, it does at least force schools to ensure that students from poorer backgrounds can fill out an answer sheet and read a standardized test, which is more than had occurred in some parts of the state in the past.

The lesson from the Texas experience, however, is that creating a high-stakes testing environment is no substitute for a sound curriculum, good textbooks, teachers who know their subject areas, and more parental involvement and control in schools.

Some of the most interesting reforms actually occurred after the national spotlight had left Texas. The TAAS was replaced by a more rigorous exam. The state passed a new program making it easier for degreed professionals to teach in high-school classrooms. There is serious discussion at the Capitol about giving the State Board of Education more authority over textbooks. Perhaps, over time, some of these ideas might achieve real gains in student achievement, without having to resort to p.r. campaigns and poll-tested slogans like “No Child Left Behind.”



“Quick! Tell Wolfowitz to send all the King’s Horses and all the King’s Men!”

The Untold Story Behind *The Passion of the Christ*

In Defense of Mel Gibson

by Alberto Carosa

What could a world-famous multibillionaire Hollywood star like Mel Gibson have in common with an unknown, cash-strapped, freelance journalist based in Rome? Virtually nothing, it would seem. Yet there is a common denominator: We are both Catholics and cherish the traditional Latin Mass, the primary liturgy of the Church before its post-Vatican II transformation into the vernacular “Novus Ordo” rite. The pre-Vatican II Latin Mass is also called the Tridentine Mass, after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which codified the ancient Roman rite in its present form.

One reason I prefer the traditional Latin liturgy is that it prompted my wife’s conversion to the Catholic faith from the Lutheran church. She used to wonder whether there was any real difference between the Novus Ordo Mass and the Lutheran service of her childhood. I believe that her conversion was the clear sign that she was the woman God had chosen for me, as I was the man He chose for her. (Contrary to current belief, in fact, the traditional Catholic principle is that marriages are not decided by us but by God, and, if too many marriages today go awry, it is precisely because of the mistaken belief that one may choose one’s spouse while ignoring God’s will. The difference is obvious: God does not make mistakes in His choices, whereas human beings do.)

My initial acquaintance with Mel Gibson dates as far back as 1996, when, through a series of unexpected connections and coincidences, I ended up being privileged to act as his translator. I saw him again after a couple of years on the occasion of his youngest child’s confirmation, which was administered by a traditional-minded bishop who lived on the outskirts of Rome. And when, in late 2002, I read that Gibson was about to start shooting a film in Italy on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I thought that it would be nice to see him again.

For obvious reasons, Mel Gibson is not a person who is easy to get a hold of, and, normally, it is best for him to establish contact at his convenience; for example, when he needs something that, for one reason or another, he is not able to procure. Can one seriously think, however, that there might be something he is not able to procure? My pessimism was proved wrong, though, and what happened is a typical case of reality going well beyond even the most fanciful of imaginations.

Gibson telephoned in the early fall of 2002, and we had a lengthy and pleasant conversation. The call came a couple of days after I had received a strange e-mail asking for help. I was about to delete the message—the sender was unknown to me, though I subsequently found out that he was Gibson’s assistant—but the subject line mentioned the need of a traditional priest for Mel Gibson.

Gibson needed to find a priest willing to celebrate the traditional Latin Mass daily on the set throughout the shooting of his film, including during an extended stay in Matera in Southern Italy. This request was being made not only for him, but on behalf of others involved in the production of the film, first and foremost the actor who played Jesus, James Caviezel (whom, to my delight, I found to be among the devout traditional-minded faithful).

My response to Gibson was very clear: I explained that it was not impossible to find a priest, but probably somewhat difficult and certainly time-consuming, especially with regard to Matera. I pledged, however, that I would not leave one single stone unturned in order to accommodate his needs.

Finding a priest to say the Tridentine Mass on the set in the Cinecittà studios in Rome would not have been all that difficult; the real problem was Matera. Obviously, he would have to be a retired priest without regular parish commitments—and one willing to move there for at least a couple of months. Where could I possibly find such a priest? My old friend Juan Miguel Montes came up with a brilliant idea: Why not ask those Vatican-approved traditional congregations to which a number of elderly and retired priests are usually attached? The solution came after I contacted Msgr. Gilles Wach, prior general of the Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest, a traditional Latin Rite congregation based in Gricigliano (near Florence). In a subsequent meeting held at the Institute’s premises in Rome, Monsignor Wach, Gibson, and I agreed: The Institute’s Abbé (in the French sense of *father*, not *abbot*) Michel Debourges would be asked to serve as chaplain in Matera.

This solution could not have been more fitting, considering that Abbé Michel Debourges had worked for many years in theater (notably with Jean Vilar), cinema, and television before discovering, albeit belatedly, that he had a priestly vocation. Monsignor Wach, his superior, reached him at his home in Montpellier, inviting him to fly to Rome and then be driven by limousine to Matera.

While Father Debourges was “a priest” associated with Mel Gibson’s project and one of the three traditional priests involved in the offering of a daily Tridentine Mass for the film, he and the other two priests were each described in the media as “the priest” behind Gibson’s Mass. I had to deal with each of them, however, because I was responsible for arranging a suitable venue for the Sunday Mass, since the Cinecittà studios would be closed.

There is an interesting *Chronicles* connection to the chaplaincy performed by Abbé Debourges: The Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest’s first church in the United States is in Rockford, Illinois, the home to this magazine and its publisher, The Rockford Institute. Rockford should be proud to house the congregation that provided a priest whose traditional religious

Alberto Carosa is the editor of Famiglia Domani Flash, a pro-family newsletter published in Rome.

service contributed to the supernatural protection and blessing that allowed the film to win success around the world.

In fact, the overwhelming success of the film should be seen in light of the overflowing graces granted by the traditional Latin Mass, all the more so for those who are not afraid to show their allegiance to it. Even if these elementary and simple concepts are difficult for most of our contemporaries to grasp, they are no less true and effectively epitomized in the Gospel, in which Our Lord proclaims: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Justice and everything else will be given unto you." To seek first the Kingdom of God means foremost to render true glory to Him. Indeed, during their interview with EWTN, Mel Gibson and Jim Caviezel said that their intention was to glorify God. What greater glory than to reproduce His Passion as faithfully as possible? Now, the very experts who predicted the film would be a financial disaster must admit that Gibson will net several hundred million dollars in the United States and Europe alone. Isn't this the "everything else" referred to above?

That *The Passion of the Christ* "is considered the most un-Hollywood of Hollywood movies" is a testament to the profound and solid faith of Mel Gibson.

I could never forget seeing, at Sunday Mass in Rome, Mel Gibson dressed as an altar boy with his white surplice and black robe (an attire that perfectly suited him) and watching him following the priest in procession from the sacristy toward the altar. Among other attendees that day were Jim Caviezel, producer Steve McEveete (also a coproducer of *The Lord of the Rings* series), and other actors and members of the cast of a wide variety of backgrounds and nationalities. This time, it was all for real, and the "set" was an old, small Catholic church in the ancient heart of the Eternal City.

I would rather not disclose the name of this church, which might still be used on future occasions, but the other two priests who served during the Rome shooting of the film were British-born Canadian Fr. Stephen Somerville and another Frenchman, Fr. Jean-Marie Charles-Roux. Born in London to devoutly Catholic parents, Father Somerville moved to Canada when he was two, attending seminary school at the Grand Séminaire of Quebec in 1952. He has served in parishes across southern Ontario and studied theology in Rome. A former member of the advisory board of the International Commission on English Liturgy, Father Somerville retired as a priest of the archdiocese of Toronto in 2002 (partly in protest of the many distortions made in the translations of liturgical texts from Latin into English), just in time to accept Gibson's flattering invitation to come to Rome to celebrate Mass in late 2002 and early 2003. "I once told Mel you're spending \$25 million to create a simulation of the crucifixion," the 72-year-old priest said, "when I can do the same thing in half an hour" (referring to his God-given priestly power to turn bread and wine into the Body and

Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ).

The other priest, French-born Jean-Marie Charles-Roux, is an old Rosminian father, headquartered in the curia of his congregation, the College of the Rosminian Fathers, near the Roman-era Caracalla Baths. In a chapel there, he can still offer his daily Mass in the traditional Roman rite. Apparently, Father Charles-Roux, who celebrates the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination this year, has never used the *Novus Ordo* rite for Mass.

The son of the French ambassador to the Holy See in the years leading up to World War II, Father Charles-Roux himself joined the French diplomatic corps as a *chargé d'affaires*, before realizing that he had a priestly vocation. He spent more than 40 years in London as parish priest of the 13th-century St. Etheldreda's Church, the oldest Roman Catholic church in Britain.

Father Charles-Roux has a sister, Cyprienne del Drago, 86, who is the widow of Prince Marcello del Drago. After retiring, he decided to come to Rome to be close to his sister. His relations with and keen interest in the Italian and European nobility are reflected not only in the vast selection of books on British and French royalty in his cell at the Rosminian college but by his participation in the solemn Requiem Mass in the Cathedral of Saint-Denis in Paris on June 8, 2004, to bury, after over 200 years, the mortal remains (consisting only of a pickled heart) of the ten-year-old King Louis XVII. The son of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie-Antoinette, who were guillotined by the French revolutionaries, he died on June 8, 1795, after having been locked in Paris' Temple, a filthy prison, for three years. What the boy endured was another passion, at the hands of the French revolutionaries: He was brainwashed, with captors forcing him to sing revolutionary songs and curse his mother's memory. He spent months alone in a darkened tower, with nobody to wash him or to clean his cell. After two centuries of mystery surrounding the boy's fate, DNA tests have convinced many historians that the relic passed secretly from person to person was truly the royal heart.

Among Father Charles-Roux's closest acquaintances are Princess Margaret; Princess Marina, who was duchess of Kent and the daughter of Prince Nicholas of Greece and Denmark; and Italy's last king, Umberto II, and his wife, Marie Jose. Ten years ago, when the duchess of Kent joined the Catholic Church, becoming the first member of the royal family to convert to Catholicism in more than 300 years, Father Charles-Roux was reported by the BBC (January 14, 1994) as saying that many were not happy with the direction the Anglican Church was taking, especially with regard to women's ordination: "There's been a major change in their tradition and the people who belong to that tradition go back to what they are familiar with," he said. "They look for support in Rome." Gibson came to know Father Charles-Roux through the BBC, when, in a brief interview, he defended the Latin Mass.

The three priests who celebrated the Tridentine Mass for the film director and his cast unanimously praise Mel Gibson as a man of real and intense faith, who does nothing to conceal it. He was the first to join them in their daily Masses, always devoutly and humbly acting as altar boy. "When he kneels and sits before God," noted Father Somerville, "he's just like all the others." I, too, was impressed by his staunch faith.

That is why I cannot but burst into laughter whenever I read that one of Gibson's detractors has accused him of simply wanting to make lots of money, hinting that his film's success is the

outcome of a superbly planned marketing strategy. Why didn't they voice their accusations before, while the film was still being shot and Mel Gibson had to endure scathing attacks, blistering criticism, and enormous pressures (and even threats) from all sides? When all sorts of stormy petrels and prophets of doom were vying to predict a financial disaster? As a result of these attacks, studios refused to distribute a subtitled film performed in "dead" languages (Latin and Aramaic), Gibson's financial supporters backtracked, and he had to provide \$30 million out of his own pocket to complete the project.

On other occasions, my laughter has been replaced by indignation, especially in considering the case of Italian novelist Umberto Eco, 72, who moved out of the realm of semiotics to become a worldwide literary sensation with *The Name of the Rose* in 1980. He may be a best-selling academic and author, but, in his review of *The Passion* in *L'Espresso* (April 22, 2004), he clearly demonstrates his ignorance: "The Passion is a film which wants to make much money by offering so much blood and so much violence," he opined, adding that "Gibson's hatred against the Nazarene must be unspeakable." The opposite is true, however, and Gibson told me personally that he wanted to show what Jesus really suffered, which had, in all previous films, been too unrealistically portrayed. Moreover, as the media have often reported, the film was motivated by Gibson's gratitude, since his meditations on the Passion helped him restore order in his life.

A liberal secularist to the core, Eco is a typical emissary of an establishment that may tolerate Maundy Thursday but always flatly rejects Good Friday, as Father Charles-Roux stated in a recent interview.

As a son of the 1968 libertarian revolution, Eco reflects the

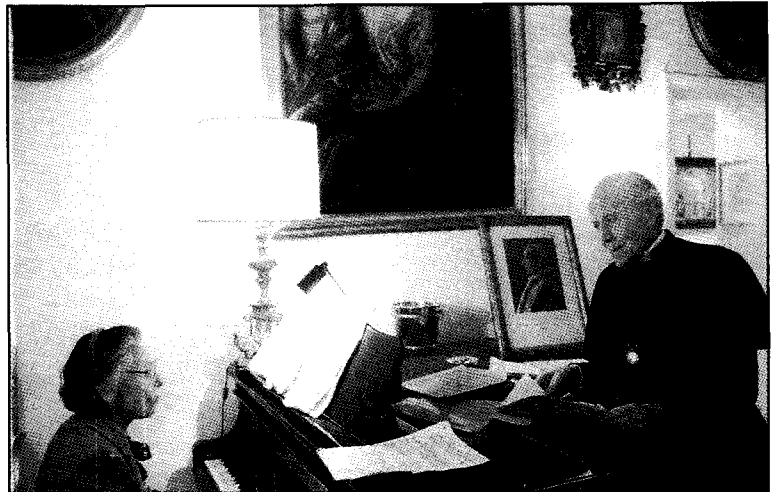


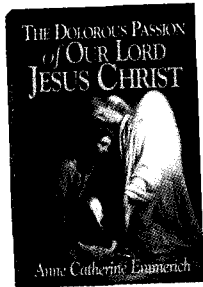
Photo courtesy of Alberto Carosa

Fr. Jean-Marie Charles-Roux with his sister.

"American way of life," a hedonistic and materialistic mind set perfectly incarnated by some of the most celebrated icons of the 60's—James Dean, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe. The driving force behind this ethos is Hollywood, yet ironically Gibson, a Hollywood actor, has, through his film, offered a powerful weapon against the moral decay Hollywood continues to foster and spread. That *The Passion of the Christ* "is considered the most un-Hollywood of Hollywood movies" (as CNN described it) is a testament not only to the outstanding courage but also the profound and solid faith of Mel Gibson, a faith born of, and nurtured by, the traditional Mass of the ages.

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—Pope John Paul II's
reported comment
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Thomas Fleming and Mother Teresa: Undoubted Motives in the Morality of Everyday Life

by Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.

"Name one."

—Anonymous

**The Morality of Everyday Life:
Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative
to the Liberal Tradition**

by Thomas Fleming

Columbia, MO: University of Missouri
Press; 270 pp., \$44.95



Too bad that, since 1966, they are no longer adding titles to the *Index of Prohibited Books*. My more than ten years as diocesan *ensor librorum*—was it this past distinction that gained me the happy task of writing this review?—would lead me to grant Thomas Fleming's *The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition* an *imprimatur* after a few nugatory adjustments, but what a book such as this really needs is a condemnation. Let me explain. A place on the Inquisition's *Index* would recommend this text to three groups of potential readers. The first are readers who already are in sympathy with the author's sound principles. They would compare him to the soon-to-be-Blessed (imagine the Church of the 22nd century giving this honor to Dr. Fleming! Stranger things have happened since Pentecost A.D. 33) Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, whose *Five Wounds of Holy Church*, a work of similar courage and good sense, was later removed from the list of offending texts. The second are those liberals who would in principle support the diffusion of any work that was the victim of censorship. (They might even get *The*

Fr. Hugh Barbour is prior of
St. Michael's Abbey in
Trabuco Canyon, California.



Morality of Everyday Life in major bookstore windows, with reviews in *America*.) The third group needs most of all to read this book. They are well-meaning old movement conservatives and neoconservatives, the folks who read publications that depend for matters of social ethics on authors whose works figure on the *Index*, like Locke, Hume, Comte, Acton, and Mill. So, if you read *National Review* without being outraged, or *First Things*, or even *Latin Mass*, then get your confessor to let you read *The Morality of Everyday Life*.

The penitential context for reading this work is most apposite to Dr. Fleming's main thesis, since he calls for a return to premodern casuistry in the evaluation of the morality of human acts, a casuistry whose apogee, after centuries of development, was the 18th-century *Theologia Moralis* of St. Alphonsus

Liguori, whose method he judges "a mature and humane approach to moral problems that has never been equaled." This book of informal essays, written in a style that is accessible to the casual reader while remaining intellectually sumptuous, has, as its main thesis, that genuine moral reasoning

is based on two principles: first, that there are general and universally applicable moral laws governing human conduct; second, that these laws may not be applied simplistically and uniformly to the great variety of human circumstances and situations.

The subtitle, *Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition*, however, should make clear that this set of essays is not merely a serene, positive exposition of this thesis but, more importantly, a rhetorical refutation of the opposing rationalist ethics that both dogged post-Cartesian "mere conservatism" and willingly accompanied post-Kantian revolutionary voluntarism, while having perhaps the most plausible success with their milder ally, Anglo-American utilitarian empiricism. Dr. Fleming shows a wide acquaintance with the principal texts of this modern philosophical tradition in ethics, yet his greatest strength lies in his domination of classical and vernacular literature in finding the *loci* most adapted to his arguments. Add to this a keen eye for the realities of ordinary family and professional life and the surrealities of contemporary social and political relations, and you have the concrete synthesis (almost a redundancy!) that I have just de-

scribed as intellectually sumptuous, and I mean after the manner of one of the better Sunday brunches (or dinners, if you prefer) available in your area. You will gladly graze on the well-presented fare served up—and with a smile this time, I promise—by the good *chef-maitre* of Rockford.

The prospective reader should not, however, expect a kind of ironic Chertonian romp, triumphant and carefree. Dr. Fleming has two characteristic modes of expression: the practical and the poignant. The former is predominant, and rightly so in a work promoting classical casuistry. The essay chapters “Too Much Reality” and “Growing Up Unabsurd” will convince any *Chronicles* reader that the magazine should feature a regular *Dear Tommy* column—if I may risk the *crimen laesae maiestatis* in so naming it—answering *casus conscientiae*. The poignant mode, though, takes you by surprise, and there are passages in the essays “Problems of Perspective” and “The Myth of Individualism,” and the “coda” in “Goodbye, Old Rights of Man,” which will make you weep, or want to.

If there is a statement among these closely consequential and yet self-contained essays that presents the most fundamental moral perspective for the resolution of cases of conscience, it is the following:

For non-liberals—that is, nearly everyone in the history of the human race—there is simply no dilemma. Family relations take precedence over any claim from any stranger no matter how good or holy, and Christians are under no less obligation than nonbelievers. “If anyone does not take care of his own,” says St. Paul (1 Tim. 5:8), “and especially of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

From this perspective, you can make all the proper judgments about the claims of government, employment, friendship, and philanthropy and desecrate as well the proper realm of heroism, which consists not so much in leaving behind this most particular of contexts as it does in sacrificing all to preserve it.

Perhaps the most practically trenchant and applicable analysis offered among those found on literally every page in the book is the brief treatment of “the pornography of compassion.” The in-

sight offered here, if applied to one’s use of the media of communication, could alone provide the lion’s share of the moral *ascesis* needed for persevering in the good nowadays, dealing as it does with what is most peculiar to precisely contemporary moral dilemmas. In this, as in practically everything else, Dr. Fleming shows himself to be a disciple of Aristotle, who is the single most often cited author in these essays. The author for whom one suspects Dr. Fleming has the most affection and respect, however, is Samuel Johnson. The contrast of his moral attitude with Voltaire’s, which Dr. Fleming so revealingly expounds, has made me resolve to take up Boswell again for my benefit.

Here, I hope, is an accidental boon of this work: to get the reader to go back and read the literature he has been lacking or has forgotten. Like a kind of latter-day St. Isidore of Seville, Dr. Fleming (we keep canonizing him by analogy) has extracted the essential nectar from so many stories and provided us with a *florilegium* in essay form that provides a model of the intelligent use of literary authorities. The ensemble of concrete example and literary precedent is a fine and attractive argument *a posteriori ex usu* for a robust classical education. One can see clearly how, even in the absence of a formal moral theory, rightly determined literary culture can provide a man with the necessary matter for sound practical judgment.

Yet alas, Dr. Fleming’s strongest point also reveals a defect, albeit a venial one. Although he is a master of letters, he is still a student of theology. There are a few errors in the work, which a *censura praevia* would have excised. One is his description of the differences between Saint Peter and Saint Paul regarding the observances of the Mosaic law. A closer reading of the case as it develops in Acts and in the epistles will show that the case is not just as Dr. Fleming describes it, but far more nuanced, evidence in itself of an original Apostolic casuistry.

Another error that is more to the point regards the characterization of Saint Alphonsus’ moral teaching as “probabilism.” Quite precisely, his theory is called “aequiprobabilism.” This school of casuistry holds that the opinion favoring liberty over law may be followed if it is intrinsically probable, all things being equal. This last condition means that, in cases where there is question of the cessation of a law that has already been in force, the opinion favors the law even if the other

opinion has probability, but, when there is question of the law having yet come into force, the opinion favors liberty. The simple probabilist holds that any truly probable opinion may be followed, even if an opposing opinion may be more probable. An equiprobabilist holds the same view but gives greater weight to laws already presumably in force. In casuistic practice, however, these views are merely useful for persuading the penitent, because the confessor may not impose his theory’s resolution of the moral case in question on the penitent, if there exists another view not condemned by authority. In reality, the only two systems of moral evaluation condemned have been *rigorism* (as in the case of the Jansenists) and *laxism* (as in the case of some Jesuits), so all the others are practically probable and certainly licit. The Q.E.D. is that the probabilist view wins out, if the penitent wants it to and the confessor keeps within the bounds of his authority. The Thomist Dominic Pruemmer explains in his classic *Vademecum*:

If one prescind from rigorism and laxism, each of the systems described is tolerated by the Church, and so the confessor has no right to impose his system on the penitent, or strictly require anything of the penitent which he is not bound to do according to the approach of another legitimate system. Thus the confessor may prudently counsel safer or more probable opinions, but he cannot strictly impose them (that is, in preference to merely probable ones). In practice let him choose those opinions which, considering all the circumstances, he foresees will produce the best fruit for the spiritual health of the penitent.

Thus, Dr. Fleming’s intuition is fundamentally sound: Probabilism, which favors liberty because of a respect for circumstances, is the default system of classical Roman Catholic casuistry. Even so, it is not Roman Catholic casuistry he is promoting but rather a return to any casuistic system at all (including Talmudic or Caroline) within the traditions that have made up our society, for such systems by their very nature harmonize with life as it is actually lived and use morality to preserve and strengthen rather than to break down and overturn ties of blood and soil and common endeavor. Apart

from those few things one may never do under any circumstances—such as blasphemy, murder the innocent, commit unnatural acts, or steal from a man poorer than oneself—it is almost impossible to indicate specific acts that must always be done regardless of circumstances. For this reason, then, there must be casuistry, since the possibilities for doing good are literally infinite.

For every manual of casuistry, there needs to be a speculative presentation of general principles. Otherwise, the ethics inculcated may be merely a kind of positivistic integralism, a “this is the way it always been, so don’t ask questions” attitude, unable to defend itself from the critical and revolutionary spirit. This companion volume to *The Morality of Everyday Life* has yet to be written, but here the reviewer dares to present a suggestion as to what its overarching, unifying insight should be. The exposition of nominalism in the sixth chapter points in the direction of the deepest level of moral reasoning. Whereas Dr. Fleming’s interpretation and application of the genesis of the notion of individualism is not one to which I would subscribe, this is the one place in the book where he brushes up against the larger philosophical issue underlying any account of the morality of human acts and transcending any given

instance of moral reasoning.

In his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, book 12, lesson 5, St. Thomas Aquinas makes the following observation:

The opinion of Plato in positing eternal substances is of no worth . . . for we cannot explain permanent movement by making up some eternal separated substances . . . For the Forms posit nothing other than separated universals, but *universals as such cannot move another, for every active or moving principle is something singular.*

To his grandmother trying to make him eat his greens by saying, “Remember the starving children in Ethiopia,” we can imagine a little Thomas Fleming responding as did an old acquaintance of mine when asked the same imperative-masked-as-question. “Name one,” he said. Morality is in the end about cause and effect, indeed about the “road which must take many a twist and turn” on the way to final causes and ultimate perfections. “The good cannot be found in mathematical entities,” said Saint Thomas, because they are mere universals that cannot exist as they are defined.

And yet it is the good that must move us, and, unless the good is a concrete good and not an abstraction, it cannot effectively move us. This holds true whether we are receiving or bestowing a good. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (here comes the third hagiographical parallel), whose one-person-at-a-time ethic so closely resembles Thomas Fleming’s, had this to say, much in the line of the overly clever turnip-green hater:

Sometime when I encounter parents, I tell myself if [*sic*] it is possible that these parents worry about those who are hungry in Africa, in India or in other countries. It is possible that they dream of ending the hunger felt by any human being. However they live unaware of their own children, of having that poverty and that hunger of heart in their very own homes. Moreover, they themselves are the ones who cause that hunger and that poverty.

One last question: Does Daddy really love faraway Fatima and Hajar as much as he does Jenna and Barbara? We hope not, but I wish Dr. Fleming would send the White House a complimentary copy of his book very soon. The *Index* is passé, but there is still the PATRIOT Act. <e>

The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

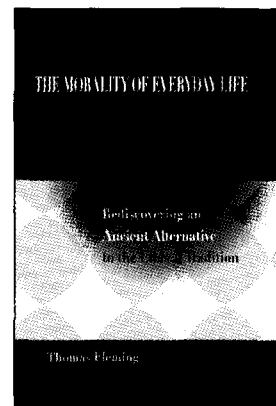
Dr. Fleming’s alternative is rooted in “everyday life,” the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.

“This book is a pleasure to read, filled with telling and memorable examples—both erudite and popular—and continually stimulating in its account. Its rhetoric blends something of a Nietzschean subversion with the humane balance of Hume. It is the most devastating critique of liberalism since MacIntyre.”

—Donald W. Livingston
Emory University

“Writing much more accessibly and knowledgeably than most modern professional philosophers, Fleming revivifies the body of thought with which civilization was created and without which it is disintegrating.”

—Ray Olson
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Toward the Heavenly City

by Thomas Fleming

**The Last Soldiers of the King:
Wartime Italy, 1943-1945**

by Eugenio Corti,

translated by Manuela Arundel

Columbia: University of Missouri Press;
304 pp., \$24.95



Eugenio Corti should be well known to *Chronicles* readers as the author of the terrifying war diary *Few Returned* and *The Red Horse*, one of the finest novels of our time and perhaps the greatest piece of Christian fiction published in my lifetime. *The Last Soldiers of the King* is a very slightly fictionalized account of Corti's experiences in the final years of World War II, when he and other Italian officers took an oath to serve under the Italian king against the German occupiers.

I am not a soldier, but the soldiers I have known described their experiences with the same unsentimental realism Corti displays in all his work. The life of the Italian soldier is compounded of dust, discomfort, and tedium punctuated by bursts of violence. When Mussolini was overthrown by his own party and the king in 1943 and the Italians declared an armistice, Corti was stationed outside of Rome. The German attack was devastating, and the author and his comrade Antonio Moroni walked south to find the British across half the length of Italy. The narrative of their rambles is a classic description of Italy's great diversity. It is not an idyllic journey, and, in their weariness, the two young men, who begin the march as fast friends, quarrel frequently over nothing.

Young Eugenio and Antonio are naive Lombards (though Eugenio had survived the horrors of the Russian campaign), and they are continually astonished by the goodness and evil they encounter. In Lucania, Eugenio meets a young woman who is going to enter a convent, and, when she reproaches him for idling in bed, the young Lombard tells her he does not like her "Bourbon church . . . with those painted cardboard saints fitted with real beards. In fact, it offends my faith, especially all the tinsel attached to their garments." When he complains that all that

glitter is a survival of paganism, the girl agrees. "But tell me," she asks, "are you sure that there are no leftovers of paganism in the great art of the cathedrals you love[?]" The young officer is speechless, but "Don't trouble yourself," she added at once, compassionately, "this is our fate: we'll never succeed in completely transforming the Earthly City into the Heavenly City."

Despite his respect for the Allies, alongside of whom he served, the young Corti is remarkably free of both hatred and ideology. He is fighting the Germans, not because of any race-hatred or commitment to the abstract principles of democracy. He is Italian, and they, who are occupying Italy, must be expelled. Faced with the desertions, incompetence, and, indeed, cowardice of many Italian soldiers, Eugenio feels unequal to the task, but he imagines the faces of friends and feels "ashamed for having begun to give up; we simply had to continue behaving like men, that was all." And yet, as he confesses, "The discomfort remained and was deep enough to border on anguish." I have read no better account of how a conscientious man wrestles with adversity, and, since the young soldier is neither a saint nor a libertarian, he is strengthened in his duty not by self-will or out of devotion to a cause but by the memory of conscientious friends.

Several years ago, when I was staying with my good friends Giuditta and Giuseppe Podestà, Dr. Corti (he has a law degree) picked me up and drove me to Bergamo, perhaps the loveliest city north of the Po River. He called up an old friend, who apparently lived in a beautiful house he wanted me to see. We spent several hours strolling around the fine art museum, and, when I admired several works by the great painter of Bergamo, Giovanni Battista Moroni, Corti told me that his friend had many Moroni paintings. He was, in fact, a direct descendant of the artist and had inherited his house and art collection. I recalled the name, and Corti confirmed that this friend was the Antonio Moroni with whom he had tramped across Italy. They had not seen each other since. After showing us the house, Moroni (a successful architect) offered us drinks in his studio, and the two veterans, who had maintained some written correspondence, cautiously picked up the threads of their old story.

For months, I have been hoping to find another reviewer for this superb book. My reluctance to undertake this project

had nothing to do with any reservations about the work or its author. I am an unreserved admirer of both. As a friend of the author and the man who suggested that the work be made available in English, however, no one could accuse me of impartiality. Impartial or not, I unhesitatingly recommend this as a good read and a wise book. It is a perfect gift for military veterans and for Christians of all ages and levels of education.

*Thomas Fleming is the editor of
Chronicles and president of
The Rockford Institute.*

Dropping the Masks

by Sean P. Dailey

The Unmasking of Oscar Wilde

by Joseph Pearce

San Francisco: Ignatius Press;
411 pp., \$19.95



The 1997 movie *Wilde* opens with a shot of Oscar Wilde (played by Stephen Fry) being lowered by bucket into a Colorado silver mine, where he recites his poetry and chats with shirtless, sweaty miners, who are obviously thrilled at a visit from such a renowned visitor. I thought it was at least half Hollywood fantasy until I came across the same anecdote in *The Unmasking of Oscar Wilde* by Joseph Pearce, who writes, "At Leadville in Colorado he was lowered in a bucket into a silver mine" where "he spent most of the night deep in the heart of the earth, talking to the miners, before being brought down the mountain by a special train at half past four in the morning."

If nothing else, the episode illustrates, intentionally or not, the importance of literature in society in the days before television, when everyone hungered for it, regardless of class or background. After its promising opening, unfortunately, the movie degenerates more or less into one sexual romp after another, with no real examination of Wilde's literary importance. And even the opening foreshadows what is to come, with Wilde casting an occasional keen glance at the young, wiry miners. That the movie takes this tack comes as no surprise, since it is based on Richard Ellmann's salacious *Oscar Wilde*, considered by many to be

the standard biography.

The Unmasking of Oscar Wilde makes no such mistakes. Indeed, one of Pearce's objectives is to debunk the conclusions of many of Wilde's biographers, especially Ellmann, even while relying heavily on Ellmann for anecdotes and other material. "Over the years, [Wilde] has been served by a string of biographers who have betrayed him with either a kiss or a curse," Pearce writes. Zeroing in on Ellmann, he adds, "the enshrining of Ellmann's study as the 'definitive biography' was in need of serious reappraisal. As a life of Wilde, it is fairly comprehensive in facts while it remains largely uncomprehending in truth."

Another objective is to rescue Wilde from those two rotten factions, the puritans and the prurient. The former rejects Wilde because of his immoral life; the latter celebrates him for the same reason. Both sides, blinded by their bias, probably miss the irony.

According to Pearce, in order to understand Oscar Wilde, you have to examine his work and leave on the periphery his public image, which was made up of whatever "masks" he chose to wear. Wilde actively cultivated an image of himself as an aesthete, the most visible aficionado of the late-19th-century decadent movement that thumbed its nose at Victorian mores. To the public, even to his wife and closest friends, Wilde presented such masks as his dandyism, his decadence, and his keen wit. In his writing, however, the masks come off, revealing a man tormented by temptation and consumed by the possibility of redemption, even in his darkest moments. "Repeatedly," Pearce writes, "Wilde reenacts Calvary in his works, most of which are Passion plays in various poses, depicting the wounding of love by the wicked . . . an expression of the conflict between Wilde's worldly mask and his inner self."

Now, concentrating on Wilde's work may sound obvious, but most modern literary biographers do not work that way. Many make a writer's work peripheral, while trolling his public image for whatever lurid details they can find. Or they rely on Freudianism, making assumptions for which they have no evidence, based on facts they do not understand. Thus, for example, J.R.R. Tolkien's official biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, chalks up Tolkien's fervent Catholic faith to his feelings for his dead mother. The possibility that Tolkien believed in Catholicism because it is true does not

seem to register. So it is with much of the material on Wilde, and two culprits are Ellmann and another biographer, Melissa Knox, who, makes no bones about her Freudian leanings referring to her book, *Oscar Wilde: A Long and Lovely Suicide* as a "psychoanalytic biography."

Pearce does a fine job discrediting these writers in his analysis of Wilde's flirtation with, and rejection of, the Catholic Church as a young man. Battling internal conflict and "sickened by his own weakness, [Wilde] is filled with anxiety and remorse" for not converting, Pearce writes. Ellmann and Knox, however, ascribe (despite sketchy evidence) Wilde's self-loathing to having contracted syphilis while at Oxford. Ellmann even says that Wilde died of it, despite the overwhelming evidence that he died of meningitis.

Knox, on the other hand, while begrudgingly accepting that Wilde "probably" did not die of syphilis, still "insists that he probably had it anyway." She offers no evidence for this other than her need for Wilde to have had syphilis for her hypothesis to work: "It is not so important that Wilde had contracted this disease as that he appears to have believed he had," Pearce quotes Knox. "He behaves as though he were living under the shadow of the horror, the uncertainty, the guilt of the feeling that he had committed a crime against himself by contracting the disease and of having bestowed it again and again with a kiss." The result of such sloppy reasoning is devastating—"the last refuge of a scandal monger," Pearce writes, and he justly condemns it:

In reality, the impact of the *invention* of Wilde's syphilis by his biographers is hard to overestimate. As Ellmann claims, his conviction that Wilde had the disease "is central to my conception of Wilde's character and my interpretation of many things in his later life." But if Wilde did not have the disease, where does that leave Ellmann's book?

These are the sort of conclusions one would expect from people for whom scientific determinism has replaced sin and the psychiatrist's couch, the confessional. Wilde, for all his faults, suffered from no such delusions. Citing the "guilt-laden recriminations" found in much of Wilde's writing, Pearce says they "have their origin elsewhere than in the syphilitic. It is likely, in fact, that they are root-

ed in nothing more, or less, than a healthy conscience, accompanied by a consciousness of the objective nature of sin."

Still, there were contradictions that became ever more pronounced as Wilde's public image gained respectability. By 1886, he was married, a father, and, of all things, editor of a woman's magazine. At this time, he started a series of sexual flings with young men, the first only 17 years old. Other liaisons would follow, culminating in the disastrous affair with Lord Alfred Douglas, the youngest son of the Marquess of Queensberry (he of the famous boxing rules), whom Wilde met in 1891.

The story of Wilde's exposure and ruin at the hands of Queensberry is recounted by Pearce in riveting fashion: the bombastic Queensberry publicly calling Wilde a sodomite; Wilde responding by suing Queensberry for libel; Queensberry countering by entering a Plea of Justification; and finally, a jury returning a verdict in Queensberry's favor, saying, Pearce recounts, "that Queensberry had been justified in calling Wilde a sodomite in the public interest. Queensberry's triumph is Wilde's downfall."

It was a complete downfall, with Wilde sentenced to two years of hard labor; it was not a permanent one, however, for it led, despite many falls, to Wilde becoming a Catholic on his deathbed. Grace, it seems, reached Wilde through his suffering. It was in prison that he wrote *De Profundis*, which Pearce calls "one of his most important works in literature." Here, the masks finally drop: "Nowhere in its pages is there the barest hint of the disingenuous," Pearce writes. "He had forsaken all masks to brandish the inadequate, naked truth of his soul."

Pearce is the right person to have written this book. There are many similarities between him and Wilde, not least of which is that both are converts. Pearce himself has come "out of the depths," overcoming an upbringing as a "Protestant agnostic" (his words) and a youth spent as a white supremacist and a member of England's National Front, for which he served two prison terms. It was during his incarceration that Pearce, like Wilde, experienced the first awakening of the faith that would lead him eventually to the Catholic Church. Perhaps he had discovered, like Wilde, "that every new approach to life leads infallibly to the same old truths." Fortunately for the world, Pearce's was not a deathbed conversion. He is still young, and I hope that

many years remain in which we can appreciate his intellect and wit in biographies such as this one.

Sean P. Dailey is editor-in-chief of *Gilbert Magazine*, a literary journal dedicated to the writing and thought of G.K. Chesterton.

Millions for Tribute

by James O. Tate

Uncle Sam in Barbary:
A Diplomatic History

by Richard B. Parker

Gainesville: University Press of Florida;
285 pp., \$59.95



That imperial anthem, the hymn of the U.S. Marine Corps, is today somehow an obscure exercise. The halls of Montezuma? The shores of Tripoli? Our gum-popping, Gucci-schlepping youth can no more respond to its referential difficulties than could the Ivy League-credentialed savants of the War Party. What's more, the pseudopatriots would be shocked to know that the music to the hymn was written by a croaking frog, Jacques Offenbach, for his *opera bouffe*, *Genevieve de Brabant*, in 1868.

Our latest Bush-directed engagement with another host of wogs may have the benefit of stimulating some historical reflection, such as that Mesopotamia, a.k.a. "Iraq," has been called the Cradle of Civilization, and for good reason. Another reflection is that our country has had some experience in dealing with violent Muslims, and we would do well to recall what has been so elaborately forgotten (or, I should say, erased). And it is just at this point that Richard B. Parker, diplomat and professor, has made such a useful contribution.

Mr. Parker has served as ambassador to Algeria, Lebanon, and Morocco and taught at the University of Virginia and Johns Hopkins University, among other institutions. His sense of the past and of cultural distinctions is both practical and academic, and he has brought this sense to bear most effectively in this latest of his books. His point, if I understand him, is that our experience has been both forgotten and misunderstood. Parker insists on a diplomatic history of events that are

dimly and erroneously recalled as military history.

The Algerine and Tripolitan wars of the early years of the 19th century actually began as hostage conflicts in 1785, when America had no navy and no British treaties to hide behind. The North African policies of privateering and enslavement were not so much outrages as routine business that had long since developed into cozy corruption. It is remarkable to think how far-flung the slave-raiding sometimes was. Algerian corsairs took 302 men, women, and children from Iceland in 1627 and 129 men, women, and children from Baltimore, Ireland, in 1631. As late as 1798, the Tunisians took 900 captives, the majority of whom were women and children, from the village of Carloforte on the island of San Pietro off southwestern Sardinia. Of course, slave-raiding in the opposite direction was far from unknown. Many French, Spanish, and Italian galleys were manned by North African slaves at the oars. As the years passed, the hostilities in the Mediterranean had become something of an arrangement.

As the Americans tried to take control of their own affairs, they found that jingoistic attitudes were not effective. Thomas Jefferson said one thing and did another, as political situations often require. "We prefer war in all cases to tribute under any form and to any people whatever," he wrote, but John Adams disagreed, and his views were justified by events. Jefferson recommended and signed off on deals to buy captives, because he had to. And this is the part that is remembered wrongly, if at all. Decatur's naval engagements were brilliant but not decisive. Eaton's march on Derna ("the shores of Tripoli"), over terrain the Afrika Korps and the Desert Rats would later know, was of no consequence. His heroics had been overtaken by events, and his allies were betrayed. Considering all the huffing and puffing, the many thousands of dollars that the Americans actually paid to the sleazy ransom artists of Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco are rather astounding.

The myth is all on the other side. The motto, "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute," was not uttered by Jefferson, nor by Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina, but by Robert Goodloe Harper of South Carolina, in 1798. Jefferson did say something to the same effect about Barbary, and the motto was a popular rallying cry during the Barbary crisis. In truth, however, the Unit-

ed States paid off. And she paid off to the Iranians in 1980, under the table; and the Algerians were very helpful in these negotiations! In Iran and in Lebanon, diplomacy, not force, secured the release of American prisoners. As Parker says, "When things go wrong, as they often will, it may help to remember that George Washington saw nothing immoral about buying our way out of a fix in 1795." And as he also says, "It is possible for diplomacy to work without force, but force will not avail much in the end if it is not backed up by effective diplomacy."

There are many benefits and pleasures to be derived from Parker's study. One of these is the registration of connections, such as with Napoleon and Talleyrand, not to mention the roll call of Founding Fathers and the presence among the early diplomats of Joel Barlow, who wrote that ponderous epic *The Columbiad* and the delightful mock-epic *The Hasty Pudding*, which would be the greatest work of its kind in English, were it not for Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. I think that Royall Tyler's *Algerine Captive* of 1797 could be mentioned here, for obvious reasons, as perhaps the finest fiction written in America in its day.

There is one other implication, at least for me, in Richard Parker's imposing and provocative study. Without at all intending to do so, this scholar and career diplomat has written the most powerful argument for isolationism that I have seen in a long time.

James O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

The Unlovely Republic

by Paul Gottfried

The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism

by Stanley G. Payne

New Haven: Yale University Press;
377 pp., \$35.00



The most respected historian specializing in the Spanish Civil War and the history of fascism, Stanley G. Payne has never hesitated to challenge received opinions in his field. Like his mentor

and friend Burnett Bolloten, Payne has been properly critical of the Spanish Republic, the regime against which the Spanish military and much of the Spanish middle class rose up in revolt in 1936. Payne notes the murders and violence this government winked at; observes the failings of its leaders, Manuel Azaña, Largo Caballero, and Joan Negrín Lopez; and repeats Bolloten's sarcastic remark at the expense of the Spanish Cortes's first gathering after the civil war had commenced:

[I]t was a strange parliament because so many of the opposition leaders had either fled or been executed [in some cases before the uprising]. Nonetheless, the left Republican *Política* would declare on December 2, that "the Republic confirms the existence of a flourishing and vigorous constitutional life," even though mass arbitrary executions had not yet come to an end.

Payne is at least equally cold toward the Soviet Comintern and Stalin, who provided limited aid to the Republican side at an exorbitant price, using the 5,000 or so Soviet soldiers and Soviet agents sent to Spain partly to wipe out leftist revolutionary rivals and to force through, by the end of the conflict, Soviet-style political and social changes. He makes abundantly clear Stalin's less-than-keen interest in winning the war, despite its being showcased (particularly after the arrival of Italian fascist forces and planes and pilots from Nazi Germany) as a struggle between the progressive left and fascism. For Stalin, Soviet intervention in Spain was a limited investment, intended to raise money through the sales of arms, underscore Soviet control of world communism, and increase influence over an economically backward Western European country. The eradication of Soviet enemies on the left was only an extension of what Stalin's government was doing elsewhere. Stalin could not afford to be generous with manpower, since he was then involved in a war against Japan and still engaged in purging his own officer class. He would help Spain on the cheap, while trying to cut a deal with Nazi Germany. In optimal circumstances, he would leave it to volunteers (such as the American Abraham Lincoln Brigade) and to the Republic's military and financial resources to repulse Gen. Francisco Franco and his Nationalist Legions.

Although Payne glorifies neither the Nationalist side nor the Soviet government, he lays the blame for losing the war on the Republic itself. Its wholesale killing of suspected enemies, brutalization of Catholic clergy, and stunning inability (apparent before July 1936) to maintain civil order contributed significantly to the Republic's loss and explains why it became, with the ascension of the far-left Negrin government in May 1937, dependent on Soviet direction. One has to feel sorry for Stalin, stuck with those losers. In land, military equipment, financial resources, and entire branches of the armed services, the Republic had a decided advantage over the insurgents until well into the struggle.

Payne's densely written work on the Soviet intervention in Spain differs from his related studies, which focus on the right. In his studies of fascism, the Spanish Falange, and the life of General Franco, though his sympathies were clearly with the European bourgeoisie, he showed the ability (what the Germans call *Einfühlung*) to empathize with the national revolutionaries grouped around José Primo de Rivera and the Spanish Falangists. His view of the Soviets is more clinical but also free of the ideological bitterness characteristic of other treatments of Stalin's role in Spain. A series of testimonials, from George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* to Ronald Radosh's *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*, has treated the Spanish Republic as a progressive democracy that was brought down by malevolent fascists and Stalinists. In recent years, neoconservatives have run with this view, while celebrating Radosh's rediscovery of the Trotskyist and socialist party line on Spain. Significantly, POUM (the group that Orwell joined), founded in Barcelona in September 1936, was a Marxist-Leninist formation that declared itself for "democratic centralism" and established close working ties to the Trotskyist International Communist League. It is hard to grasp how these socialist revolutionaries would have protected constitutional freedom better than the conservative national side that triumphed in March 1939.

Harder still is to read Payne, or the earlier work done by Bolloten at the Hoover Institution, and cling to illusions of good democrats having been defeated by fascists. Although an authoritarian military leader who accepted German and Italian support, Franco did not create a Spanish equivalent of Nazi Germany or fascist Ita-

ly. Instead, he ended his caretaker rule by turning Spain into a constitutional monarchy. The Spanish Republic was neither a true constitutional regime nor a protector of life and property. It was complicit in organized murder against the right, including Spanish Catholic parliamentarians, and did nothing to control its Anarchist allies, who were killing property owners and churchmen. The most one could say in its defense is that not all of its leaders were equally contemptible. The president at the time of the uprising, Manuel Azaña, hoped to preserve parliamentary amenities but was colossally inept in accomplishing that—or anything. With due respect to Radosh, there was nothing the West, or even the Soviets, "betrayed" by not riding to the Republic's rescue.

Paul Gottfried, a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, is the author, most recently, of Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt (University of Missouri Press).

The First New Deal

by Laurence M. Vance

Tariffs, Blockades, and Inflation: The Economics of the Civil War

by Mark Thornton and Robert B. Ekelund

Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources; 124 pp., \$65.00



A calm image of businessmen and clerks engaged in the buying and selling of cotton on the New Orleans Cotton Exchange is not what you expect to find on the dust jackets of books about the Civil War. The Edgar Degas painting that graces the cover of *Tariffs, Blockades, and Inflation*, however, tells the reader that this is no ordinary book on the War Between the States. One searches its pages in vain for depictions of battle scenes, accounts of heroic acts, or descriptions of weapons and uniforms. Instead, there are clear explanations of how economic issues were driving forces behind the causes of the Civil War.

Mark Thornton and Robert Ekelund have collaborated on many articles on the Civil War that have appeared in a vari-

ety of publications. Both are economists who write extensively in their field. The authors believe that the War Between the States drastically altered "the very substance and concept of the American nation." They see it as a sectional conflict with a number of related parallels: the Jeffersonian tradition *versus* the Hamiltonian one, agrarianism *versus* industrialism, states' rights *versus* governmental centralism. These dichotomies are all explored in their book, together with the misguided economic policies adopted by both sides, to their detriment.

The authors' discussion of the tariff question is actually a study of the cultural differences between the North and the South. Thornton and Ekelund argue that the most important aspect of the war took place at sea, between the blockade runners and the blockading fleet. The blockade resulted not only in reduced production and trade but in hoarding and speculation. How the Confederacy as well as the Union used inflation to finance the conflict and disguise its costs is described, along with the monetary legacy of the war. The authors trace inflation and financial panics to the federal government's intervention in the banking industry, which, up until that time, had been primarily a matter for state reg-

ulation, and demonstrate that L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* may be read as an allegorical treatment of the monetary concerns expressed by the Populists in the late 19th century.

Thornton and Ekelund explode the myth that the scourge of war can actually benefit an economy as a whole. Like the War Between the States itself, the postwar period we call Reconstruction, they note, is "rarely [described] from the perspective of economic theory." The authors argue that technological improvements, the intercontinental railroad, large-scale heavy industry, and the basic national-science institutions began before the war, not as a result of it. The Civil War retarded economic development; yet, owing to the overriding focus by historians on the abolition of slavery, it has been viewed as a national benefit rather than as a national disaster.

According to Ekelund and Thornton, the ideological origins of the war are found in the early 1800's. Thus, rather than to the exploits of Lee and Grant (who receive no mention in the book), we are introduced to the politics and policies of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and John C. Calhoun. And, instead of confronting the tradition-

al Democratic/Republican division, we read of the Democratic-Republicans, Federalists, Antifederalists, Free-Soilers, Whigs, and anti-immigration parties. The mercantilist economic agenda of the nascent Republican Party that was anathema to the agrarian South, and its philosophical connection with Hamilton and Clay, receive special attention in this book. The election of Lincoln in many ways ended the limited government envisioned by the Framers. Thornton and Ekelund compare the "flurry of new laws, regulations, and bureaucracies" created by the Lincoln administration to that of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930's; indeed, they point out that the term *New Deal* was coined by a newspaper editor in 1865 to describe the rule of Lincoln and the Republicans.

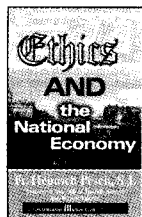
Although small in size, *Tariffs, Blockades, and Inflation* is an extremely penetrating work that broadens our understanding of the great sectional conflict we call the Civil War—a war that not only changed forever the cultural fabric of the United States but inexorably altered the government established by the Framers.

Laurence M. Vance is an instructor at the Pensacola Bible Institute and a freelance writer.

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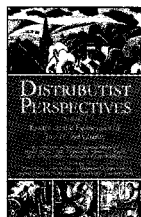


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Holding the Pass

It has been ten years since the death, at his home in the village of Mecosta, Michigan, of Russell Kirk, author of *The Conservative Mind* and one of the main spokesmen for organized American conservatism as it was known throughout his life. While there were other architects of conservatism who were Kirk's contemporaries, almost all of them have faded from the conservative memory—in part, I think, for the simple reason that several simply died at an early age before the conservative movement acquired the resources to be able to institutionalize them and their memories sufficiently and in part, also, because conservatives themselves are not disposed to remember most of them anyway. Kirk's fate was perhaps more fortunate since he lived well into the years when conservatism supposedly had "triumphed," if you believe its court historians. Kirk himself did not believe them then and would not believe them today if he were alive to read them.

Kirk has survived in the conservative memory as something of a cult figure, and there is now a book-length study of his thought by a friend and former student, Wesley McDonald, whose *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology* was ably reviewed by Scott P. Richert in the July issue. Reading Mr. Richert's review and, afterward, Dr. McDonald's book, I was driven to some thoughts about Kirk himself and his legacy.

A well-educated man of courtly manners, Kirk was undoubtedly the major exponent of what came to be known in conservative-movement circles as "traditionalism," the principal counterpart and sparring partner of its "libertarian" wing. *Traditionalism* was not the best term for this persuasion, but, because Kirk himself invoked the concept of tradition so much, it stuck. Essentially, traditionalism is identical to what is otherwise called "Burkean" or sometimes "philosophical" conservatism but which I prefer to think of as "classical conservatism," the conservatism espoused by the enemies of the French Revolution and Enlightenment in England and Europe of the late 18th and 19th centuries and whose major exponent, in England at least, was Edmund Burke. For Kirk, though not necessarily

for other supporters of "traditionalism," Burke was the icon that defined the persuasion, and, in *The Conservative Mind*, Burke is the archetypal figure. The several other thinkers whom Kirk discusses there, none of whom shared Burke's historical stature, appear as mere avatars of the deified Edmund.

Kirk's classical conservatism was a welcome relief from the tedious and barren libertarianism that strutted about during and after the New Deal and has since managed to thrive as the dominant ideology in the contemporary conservative mind (as opposed to the neoconservative mind, in which democratic socialism remains the prevailing paradigm). Recognizing only one problem ("the state") and only one solution ("individual liberty"), libertarianism offers nothing to those concerned with the impending destruction of their civilization by forces that are largely irrelevant to its twin obsessions. The tendency, if not the actual argument, of libertarianism in the last 50 years has been to deny that Soviet communism was ever a threat, to embrace mass immigration, to endorse global free trade, to abandon and ridicule both nation and religion, and to welcome the deliberate destruction of traditional culture and morality by whatever forces (in the state or outside it) are waging war against them. The great value of Kirk's "traditionalism" was to just say no to the sophomoric and dangerous libertarian poison that soon corroded and corrupted the conservative minds of late-20th-century America, at a time when few others of real conservative disposition possessed either the learning, the powers, or the courage to say it.

Yet Kirk was by no means a profound or even consistent thinker, and one virtue of Dr. McDonald's short book, which today is probably the best short exposition of classical conservatism that I know of, is that it makes clear that Kirk often declined to pursue certain philosophical issues as deeply as he might or to develop his thought into a larger and more coherent intellectual framework. Kirk's thought was invaluable in offering an introduction to concepts of "order," "authority," and "tradition" that were alien to the classical liberal-libertarian



ideologues of the day. He laid down (if he did not develop very clearly) a concept of freedom derived from an Aristotelian view of man as a creature of society in contrast to the libertarian idea of freedom derived from a (fictitious) pre-social "state of nature." If human beings are naturally social, then freedom in the libertarian sense is necessarily in antagonism to the social bond and its institutional supports, and real freedom can exist only in relationships and actions that are compatible with social order. "Ordered" or "rooted" freedom and its supports, authority, hierarchy, and community—and not Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—are the defining norms of classical conservatism.

The problem with Kirk's traditionalism does not lie in its assumptions or even in his sometimes murky exposition of its themes but in his application of its concepts to contemporary American life and the uses that the conservative movement has made of them. It is a problem that arises from taking Edmund Burke as the central hero of the traditionalist cause.

Burke's standing as a conservative comes from his important role as an enemy of the French Revolution and a defender of the 18th-century British (and European) dynastic state. It may be open to question whether that state was really worth conserving, but certainly, in comparison to the tyranny, terrorism, and chaos that Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity unleashed, it was a veritable paradise, and, since Burke himself had spent much of his earlier life as a critic of the dynastic state, he cannot be faulted for defending it against its destroyers.

What Burke offered, however, was a defense. The order he championed existed and dominated, and his task was to build a case as to why it should be conserved. That was not the problem that

American “conservatives” faced in the period (the late 1940’s and early 50’s or later) when Kirk began to write and when the American conservative movement was formed.

As I argued in this space some months ago, the revolution took place in America well before that time—by some Old Right analyses, in the American Civil War, or, at the latest, in the New Deal-World War II eras, when a new ruling elite, the managerial class, displaced the old bourgeois elites from political and cultural hegemony. Unlike for Edmund Burke and the defenders of the ancien régime of his time, for the American right, the problem was not defense but offense—not conservation but (at best) restoration.

That, however, was not the strategic goal of the American conservative movement as it began to congeal in the 1950’s. The essential premise of any movement that is comfortable with the label “conservatism” is that the order it seeks to conserve is healthy and that it ought to be conserved, and that was the premise with which American conservatism started out in the 1950’s (and with which it has finished up in the first decade of the current century). One of the main influences on it that encouraged it to accept that premise was Russell Kirk.

Reading over parts of *The Conservative Mind*, Kirk’s major and always his most influential work, that premise leaps out. “In America,” Kirk wrote in 1953 (and the words remained essentially unchanged through the seventh and last edition of 1985),

the Federal Constitution has endured as the most sagacious conservative document in the history of Western civilization; the balance of interests and powers which John Adams and the Southern statesmen defended still operates, however threatened by centralization in this century; and no one advocates a radical revision of political establishments in America, despite the numerous abuses that shelter themselves behind federal and state constitutions.

Private property, Kirk assured his readers, “remains an influence of vast power in Britain and America” (and presumably, therefore, was secure), while “respect for established usage and longing for continuity are not dead among English-speaking peoples, either,” and,

Of the six premises for conservative belief which are listed in the introductory chapter of this book, then, four at least continue to animate the social impulses of a great many people in America and Britain.

Such passages could be extended indefinitely.

The main thrust of Kirk’s conservatism was to assure Americans that everything was really OK, that the society in which they lived and the government and dominant social and political forces that prevailed in the United States were healthy. As Old Right journalist Garet Garrett remarked in his 1938 essay, “The Revolution Was,” “There are those who still think they are holding the pass against a revolution that may be coming up the road,” and Russell Kirk seemed to be among them. But, as Garrett saw clearly, the truth was that “The revolution is behind them. It went by in the Night of Depression, singing songs to freedom.”

Kirk and most conservatives seemed never to have heard the songs, though I knew Russell Kirk well enough in his last years to know that he did indeed hear them and understood clearly what they meant. Still, he shrank, for whatever reasons, from betraying what today has long since ceased to be a secret of empire: The American order is bankrupt; both political parties and the major ideological identities associated with them are part of the problem; and the regime that prevails in the triple metropole of Washington-New York-Hollywood is the enemy of the American people and of its historic social and political order. The problem today is not how to conserve it, let alone how to persuade Americans that it ought to be conserved. The problem today is how to persuade more Americans that it ought to be—and can be—changed.

Despite Kirk’s own awareness of the corruption of the contemporary American order and the regime that rules it, the conservative movement with which he soon allied himself (reluctantly, as Dr. McDonald points out) made use of his articulation of “traditionalism” to defuse and emasculate any inclinations to radicalism on the part of the American right. Headquartering itself in Manhattan and whatever broom closets in Washington it could ferret itself into, the American conservative movement devoted itself to the defense of a political order in which it was already an unwelcome and embarrassing guest, and, as the New Left of

the 1960’s launched its assault on the regime constructed by Franklin Roosevelt and his heirs, most conservatives could think of no response other than an angry endorsement of the regime. The principles of authority, hierarchy, and community that Kirk’s traditionalism had embraced and developed were deployed to explain why liberal or leftist deans who had spent their careers poisoning every young mind with which they had come in contact should not be kicked down the stairs of their own office buildings and why the young Americans whose minds they had poisoned should be drafted to fight an ideological crusade that the ruling class had no intention of winning and no good reason to fight at all.

The irony of Kirk’s position is that, far more than the libertarianism that was its main rival on the right, “traditionalism” offered a full and more persuasive case against both the deracinating regime of liberalism that conservatives began to defend (whence came their alliance with the neoconservatives, who never showed any dissatisfaction with the regime at all) and the savagery of the New Left. But most conservative writers of the time never made that case. Instead, they rallied round the flag, defending the war in Vietnam, the draft, and the essential goodness and health of the society and government the counterculture attacked, smug in their satisfaction that everything was really OK.

Today, we know it is not OK, as we know the Supreme Court has waged a continuous war against traditional morals, culture, freedom, and order ever since Kirk assured us the federal Constitution was “enduring”; as the federal leviathan has swollen ever larger and dug itself ever more deeply into the private lives and minds of Americans; and as the institutions, traditions, and the very people of the American nation are systematically discarded and replaced by the powers that conservatism continues to defend. Perhaps some on the American right did sense that, for all the virtues of Kirk’s classical conservatism as an alternative to libertarianism or the even more pathetic “fusionism,” it simply was not adequate to the mission that serious men of the right in the middle of the 20th-century journey should have taken up. “If you were a marine in a landing boat,” asked Whittaker Chambers with respect to Kirk’s *Conservative Mind*, “would you wade up the seabeach at Tarawa for *that* conservative position? And neither would I!” c

One Moment in Time

"You mean," said Marina, "you mean that we're sitting here over Hell?"

"Over a hell, conceivably. There are many hells, and the same place may be Hell or Purgatory, depending upon the situation. Most of them are private."

Those words echo in my thoughts as we approach the building. Turner School, built in 1898, is no Balgrummo Lodging, the Scottish manor house that is the setting of Russell Kirk's *Lord of the Hollow Dark*, and not simply because the massive brick-and-stone structure sits right in the heart of Rockford, Illinois, about as far geographically and culturally as you can get from the suburbs of Edinburgh.

Still, as I draw near to the building for the first time, the words play over and over again in my mind. For in Turner School, as in Balgrummo Lodging, unspeakable horrors—indeed, ritual murders—have taken place, and the closer we come, the more strongly I feel the possibility of unavenged souls trapped in the place of their bodies' destruction—and the souls of some of their destroyers as well, returned here, years later, to the site of their sin. If there is such a thing as a Hell on earth (and theologians as late as St. Alphonsus Ligouri have argued that Hell is, indeed, a physical place), Turner School, I can have no doubt, is one.

Over the past eight-and-a-half years, I have passed by here countless times, but always in a car. Driving down Broadway, headed to a bookstore or restaurant, you cannot help but shudder as you pass, if you know what Turner School has become. The moment, however, passes quickly, aided by the speed of Dr. Kirk's "mechanical Jacobin." Only approaching by foot, and with the intent of being *here*, does the full weight of this place come to bear.

For Turner School is no longer a school but a victim, like the children it used to house, of America's 50-year-long failed "experiment" in school desegregation. Rockford suffered for 13 years (from 1989 to 2002) under a federal desegregation lawsuit whose educational and social effects will be felt for decades to come and

which may, in fact, have destroyed this town. And Turner School was there at the beginning, closed by the Rockford School Board in 1978 after parents, led by the courageous David Strommer (later, in the 1990's, a school-board member and one of the fiercest opponents of desegregation, school consolidation, and judicial taxation), rose up against a plan to bus students from Turner to other schools to satisfy state "integration" guidelines. In the end, the board decided it was simply easier to force the issue by shuttering the school and scattering the children to the wind.

In doing so, the board not only sacrificed the students then at Turner School to the gods of "progress" and "diversity" but offered up future generations to something even worse: The building now houses the Northern Illinois Women's Clinic (N.I.W.C.), the euphemistic name attached to Rockford's only abortuary.

Partisans of state-sanctioned murder, such as Planned Parenthood, like to portray the "procedure" as "safe" and "clinical," performed as an "outpatient service" in "modern facilities." Fort Turner (as its owner, Wayne Webster, refers to the decommissioned school) gives the lie to the glowing description.

In the pro-death mythology, thousands of women died every year in back alleys across America until an "enlightened" Supreme Court, in 1973, overturned the laws of all 50 states regulating the barbaric "procedure." From the outside, however, Fort Turner has much in common with the alley to its east, where, as we walk down it, Aaron Wolf finds tattered porn magazines and empty liquor bottles. The horrifying thought crosses both of our minds: Are children being conceived out here, only to be butchered inside? At the very least, it seems likely that less "respectable" partisans of death—less respectable, that is, than politicians and doctors—may get a sick thrill from performing their own ritual acts so close to the gates of Hell, where even the mulberry trees in the fencerow refuse to bear fruit.

While the 50,000 or more children he has murdered over the past 30 years will never have names by which they can be



remembered, the butcher of Fort Turner, "Dr." Richard Ragsdale (I refuse to use his title without the inverted commas), will go down in history for his "contribution" to "a woman's right to choose." Showing exquisite care for his "patients," Ragsdale filed suit in 1988 to overturn an Illinois law that required "clinics" like N.I.W.C. to have operating rooms that meet hospital standards. (Ragsdale was already operating out of Fort Turner by that point.) *Turnock v. Ragsdale*, scheduled to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on December 5, 1989, was expected to provide the Court with an opportunity to revisit *Roe v. Wade* (or at least to clarify questions raised earlier that year in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*). On November 22, however, the case was settled out of court, when the state of Illinois agreed to create a new class of lightly regulated abortion "clinics" (that just happened to include Ragsdale's chamber of horrors at Fort Turner) and guaranteed the "right" to an abortion with essentially no restraints through the 18th week of pregnancy.

"Dr." Ragsdale has privileges at two of the hospitals in town, SwedishAmerican and Rockford Memorial. (St. Anthony's does not let him in the door.) As we walk back up the alley to Broadway and the front of Fort Turner, I wonder: Do any members of the board of either hospital ever pass by here? If so, what do they think of the rubber chickens hanging in the gable windows, Wayne Webster's sick slap at the pro-lifers who meet out on the sidewalk every week to pray? Or the signs in other windows: "What the Hell You Looking Up Here For?"; "PROTECTED BY MR. SMITH & MR. WESSON"; and, just to show his concern for his tenant's "patients," "BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS AND WILD WOMEN"? (Previous signs were even worse: "Jesus loves these braindead

a--holes," "These Bible-thumpers suffer from lack-o-nookie," "Free coat hangers to picketer's wives and mothers," "God bless these horny old sweat-hogs.") Or the mocking little shrine Webster has created of items—a crucifix, a nun doll, a picture of Pope John Paul II—left behind by pro-lifers? Do they know that Webster's own son went to Turner School, where now 25 to 70 children are slaughtered every week? Do they even care?

The answer is obvious. The "pro-life" Republican candidate for mayor in 2001, Denny Johnson, sits on the board of SwedishAmerican. When I questioned him on a radio talk show during the campaign, he gave the standard dodge—Ragsdale doesn't perform abortions in *our* hospital—and dismissed my suggestion that he take a pledge that, as mayor, he would use zoning regulations to close down Fort Turner. (The idea, he admitted, had never even crossed his mind.)

Webster and Ragsdale are both living proof that abortion is not simply a "service" that someone can "provide" while being otherwise normal and well adjusted. Webster has confronted pro-lifers outside of Fort Turner wearing a devil costume; he once hired someone to pass out helium-filled condoms to pro-lifers' children. On killing days, he broadcasts loud music and other sounds from loudspeakers mounted on the outside of the building, to drown out the voices of the faithful praying the rosary. Ragsdale and his wife, Debbie DeMars, were charged in September 1994 with four counts of producing and distributing child pornography, after they took film to a local developer that included pictures of their three-year-old foster daughter in suggestive poses, wearing a black-lace thong, with her genitals exposed. When Ragsdale and his lawyer claimed that the charges were politically motivated, Winnebago County's Republican "pro-life" state's attorney, Paul Logli, quickly cut a deal in which, in exchange for the charges being dropped, DeMars signed a statement admitting that the photos "were of an inappropriate nature and could constitute a violation of state law." (If the photos "could constitute a violation of state law," isn't it the duty of the state's attorney to prosecute?) State child-protection services apparently regarded the situation more seriously than Logli did: The girl was removed from the home and never returned to Ragsdale and DeMars.

Walking down the sidewalk on Broad-



Photo courtesy of David Monty

The Turner School kindergarten class of 1959 prepares for the Easter Parade.

way, I understand clearly for the first time the deepest dimensions of this battle. If they knew where the gates of Hell were, would the faithful not keep constant vigil outside, offering—as in a scene from a medieval fresco—rosaries as lifelines to those being dragged down into the pit by leering demons? And these doors—once the girls' entrance to Turner School—are truly a gate to Hell.

Most pro-lifers speak reflexively of abortion as "the destruction of innocent human life." Would that it were. Looking at the doors, I begin to understand the frustration and the horror that must have overwhelmed Fr. John Earl when, in September 2000, he smashed his car into Fort Turner and set about destroying the inside with an ax, before Webster, who lives in his house of horrors, convinced him to stop by firing two shotgun blasts into the wall. For Father Earl remembers the words of the Psalmist: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." The children sacrificed on Richard Ragsdale's altar of progress bear no personal guilt, but they have inherited Adam's sin. That is why abortion is perhaps the most perfect weapon Satan has ever devised: Deprived of Baptism, the souls of these children may never find true rest. That—more so than the death and destruction of the body—is the true horror of the act.

Father Earl, by his reception of Holy Orders, is an *alter Christus*, and perhaps he thought he was acting as such. Some acts in salvation history, however, are only to be performed once, and Christ Himself descended into Hell, throwing the gates wide. Our struggles are out in this world, not inside the doors of Fort Turner.

Some abortionists undoubtedly understand what they accomplish when they

destroy an unborn child; does Richard Ragsdale understand as well? We can only pray that he does, because then there is the possibility that his victims are, in some sense, martyrs, and that their souls may thus find rest.

In Kirk's novel, 12 disciples gather at Balgrummo Lodging, where their leader, Apollinax, promises to grant them a "Timeless Moment"—an experience to be gained through the murder of a mother and her fatherless child. In the midst of their act of depravity, Apollinax arranges for them, too, to die; and he knows that he will have created the only kind of Timeless Moment man can gain through his actions alone: the inverse of the Beatific Vision; an eternity in Hell.

Confused and beguiled by the lies of the god of progress, the prince of this world, the women who enter the gates of this hell, if they emerge again, may, in time and through the prayers of the faithful, come to recognize and—more importantly—repent of their sin. And, in time, Richard Ragsdale and Wayne Webster will pass on, and Fort Turner may once again lie vacant, except for those souls trapped in a Timeless Moment within its walls—and possibly those other souls who, having repented, are graciously granted the ability, after their death, to continue, in time, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

"You mean," said Marina, "you mean that we're sitting here over Hell?"

"Over a hell, conceivably. There are many hells, and the same place may be Hell or Purgatory, depending upon the situation."

c

Letter From England

by *Christie Davies*

The Muslim Conquest of Britain



Many people fear that there will be a violent conflict in Britain with the Muslims. They are wrong. Al Qaeda may commit the most appalling atrocities in the United Kingdom, as it has done in New York and Madrid, but the coming struggle will not be a violent one. Most of the Muslims living in Britain have the same personal concerns as their nominally Christian neighbors—health, home, family, children, employment, business, enjoyment, consumption, ownership, taking care for one's old age. They are not going to put these at risk, nor do they feel any great animosity to their vaguely Christian neighbors with whom they must deal on an everyday basis. Among Muslims, only a few young students and drop-out types are going to become terrorists. Muslim suicide bombers may sound terrifying, but they are no different from an Irish Republican bomber supplied with a sophisticated timer paid for by Colombian drug dealers or Boston bartenders. The Muslim takeover of Britain will be a peaceful one, a product of the rottenness of a liberal Britain in which no one is expected, indeed permitted, to take any pride in their particular national or religious identity. The Muslims alone understand the need for boundaries and solidarity. In the land of the politically correct, victory goes to those who still believe in themselves.

The defeat of the nominally—perhaps one should say, ancestrally—Christian in Britain and their supplanting by the Muslims will come about slowly and peacefully, though inexorably and inevitably, as a result of the decadence and loss of nerve of once-Christian Britain and the self-induced economic failure of most individual Muslims. The strongest indication of the decay of Christian Britain is the collapse of the birthrate to below replacement level. However, no one is willing to recognize the seriousness of the problem nor to take proper measures to deal with it, lest they be accused of racism for wish-

ing to reproduce people like themselves. Britain has a collective death wish.

The demographic gap will be filled by Muslim immigrants who will then choose cultural and sometimes geographical self-segregation. In Britain, Hindus and Sikhs from India are gradually dispersing to take advantage of individual opportunities in the markets for jobs and housing and starting to intermarry with locals, but Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh tend to remain huddled in the districts where they first settled. Many of the Muslims originally came to Britain to do unskilled work in factories—indeed they manned entire industries whose managers feared they would fail if they could not recruit cheap immigrant labor to staff cotton and woollen mills and knock together borax for the furniture trade. When the factories inevitably closed in the face of competition from even cheaper labor abroad, the Muslims were stranded. The road out of such a crisis for the individual lies in acquiring new ways and new skills and being willing to go and look for work and housing among non-Muslims; their mind-set often precludes this. Those British people, mainly Hindus and Sikhs, whose ancestors came from India in the last half-century are already better educated and wealthier than the autochthonous Anglo-Saxons and Celts. Theirs has been a success story. By contrast, those whose ancestors came from Muslim Pakistan and Bangladesh have failed to become upwardly mobile because they insufficiently prize non-Muslim learning, instrumental rationality, individual competitiveness, questioning, and innovation. The fault for Muslim failure does not lie with those who run British schools or with employers, both of whom are generally quite unable to tell them apart from the Indians. There is equality of prejudice against those who share a common hue but a marked difference in outcome between the communities. Even Muslims whose ancestors came from India are more likely to be unemployed than their Hindu counterparts. Religion is important in and of itself in influencing economic success.

Because of their inertia and self-segregation, British Muslims have a higher birthrate than the Sikhs and Hindus, whose increasingly educated women-

folk are coming to prefer smaller families. Their lowly position in the social-class hierarchy by itself guarantees that Muslims will multiply faster than their more prosperous nominally Christian neighbors. In all religiously plural countries, the Muslim birthrate is higher than that of people of other religions. In India, they outbreed the Hindus; in Lebanon and Yugoslavia, they outbreed the Christians, a factor that has contributed significantly to the religious tensions in those countries. It will have the same effect in Britain, though it will take a different form because of the enfeebled sense of identity of the post-Christian British.

The high birthrate of Muslims is often linked to the fatalism and ignorance that have also rendered them shapers of wood and drawers of thread. It is largely because of the low status of women in their community and partly because of a muted but real wish to outnumber others by competitive breeding. If you cannot attain strength by means of intellectual and economic achievement, you seek to do so through weight of numbers. Such is the logic both of democracy and of aggression. The crucial factor, though, is the lack of status, power, and independence enjoyed by women within Muslim families. Keeping women down is the great source of Muslim strength.

Muslims (and, in fairness, other groups too) use arranged marriages as a way of getting around Britain's immigration laws. A British passport is a valuable commodity for someone living in a poor country, because it will allow him to settle in that moderately prosperous society with its extensive and generous welfare state on which they may batten the moment they arrive. The most popular scam is to contract an arranged marriage to a British citizen and then enter the country as that person's spouse. Britain has been reluctant to prevent spouses from entering the country, on the assumption that emotional ties exist between the partners and that it would cause intolerable hardship to separate them. In the case of new or proposed arranged marriages where the two people may not even have met, this objection does not apply, and it is perfectly ethical to tell the British partner to go and live with his spouse in the other country or else to live apart from her. Accordingly, Britain introduced the "prima-

ry purpose" rule whereby a British subject could only import a spouse if he or she could prove that the main purpose of the marriage was not to evade the laws on immigration. When Prime Minister Tony Blair's politically correct New Labour party came to power in 1997, this sensible and just rule was abolished, leading to a flood of quite unnecessary new immigrants.

I say *unnecessary*, since the existing Muslim communities in Britain are sufficiently large to afford a suitable pool of desirable spouses for arranged marriages all round. Many Muslim men, though, do not want to marry educated British Muslim women, whom they fear may have acquired something of the bossy and argumentative disposition of their English counterparts. It is better to seek a timid, traditional, uncontaminated woman from one's ancestral village who cannot speak English. She may well even bring a dowry with her or be part of some sordid land deal in Azad Kashmir, East Bengal, or the Punjab. The marriage may be contracted in exchange for the marriage of the foreign woman's brother with the groom's British-born sister, also in order to obtain a British passport. The potentially independent-minded sister will then be tamed by this fiercely traditional husband, who will knock out of her any subversive British ideas about the higher status that should be accorded to women. It is difficult to see why these women, who are treated as commodities rather than as free agents by their male relatives, should not also be so regarded by customs and excise and excluded from the British market in the same way as a cargo of imported pickled eggs. In the very worst cases, young British Muslim women—and sometimes, men—are lured to Pakistan or Bangladesh on holiday ostensibly to visit relatives or, worse still, to visit a deceitful parent who has gone there from England, is feigning a fatal illness, and wishes to say goodbye. Once there, the British Muslim youngsters are deprived of their passports and credit cards and held captive until they agree to marry a local person who wants to emigrate to Britain. The incidence of subsequent miraculous recovery by erstwhile dying parents puts even Lourdes to shame. Such marriages mean the endless importation of Muslim spouses who know no English and nothing of British institutions and mores. The whole process of integrating newcomers into British society is thus overturned in each generation. The naive imported

Muslim wife will have the same number of children as she would have had back home, and the educated British Muslim woman tricked or forced into marriage with a foreigner will have to resign herself to submission and frequent childbearing. The Muslim "leaders" have reason to rejoice: They have found a new way of increasing their numbers and of retraditionalizing their younger generations.

The problem is not one of individuals but of aggregates. If the British Muslims made their religion a purely private matter, as the Hindus are in the process of doing, their arrival would not matter as much. It is not a question of their beliefs—which, in many ways, are closer to those of the Christians than those of the idolatrous seekers of an escape from the wheel of reincarnation through the contemplative elimination of their very selves. It is the Muslims' determination to be heard as a political-religious collectivity that is threatening. Muslim spokesmen (and it is always men) in Britain regularly remind their fellow citizens of how many million Muslims they "represent." No Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Baptist, or Mormon leader would have the impudence to assert a political claim of this kind. At present, the Muslim presence in British politics consists of their control of a few Labour constituencies, but, in time, they will form their own exclusive political parties as they have long done to the detriment of democratic India. As the British know from their experience in Northern Ireland, communal politics with religiously based parties is a disaster for democracy. It would be even more of a disaster if similar Muslim parties were to be formed in France, Germany, and the Netherlands and such parties formed an alliance in order to hold the balance of power in Europe. They would be able to combine in support of a common cause, such as loosening the immigration rules to allow even more Muslims to enter Europe, or in defense of enhanced "apartness" for Muslims, thus further increasing their power.

The Muslim takeover of Britain will happen slowly and by stealth. In the future, anyone who dares to oppose it will be prosecuted before and condemned by Britain's politicized judiciary, probably without the benefit of trial by jury, ostensibly for stirring up religious hatred. Britain's New Labour rulers undervalue and condemn the moderate solidarity of the indigenous people, yet fail to condemn the obsessive group-minded-

ness of the Muslims. Britain's left-wing elite have undermined the British family, caused the birthrate to collapse, subsidized illegitimacy, and deprived fathers of rights in the name of feminism, yet they say nothing about the tyranny of the Muslim extended family and its willingness to treat women as objects to be bartered and battered and as machines to produce sons. They cannot see that secularization has led to the collapse of Britain's moral order nor that Muslim zeal is contrary to the core values of their society. They are the hypocrites who point to the mote in the eye of their own people but ignore the beam in the eye of anyone carrying the privileged title of "minority."

The future Muslim takeover of Britain, however, is not something that anyone has planned but rather the spontaneous consequence of uncontrolled immigration, demographic collapse, and cultural decline. Gradually, Britain will become part of the Muslim world, with all its innate backwardness, leaving the modern world to be divided between the fiercely Christian Americans and the secular Confucian Chinese.

Dr. Christie Davies, a graduate of Cambridge University, has lectured and published in England, India, and the United States and has traveled extensively in the Muslim world. His latest book, 'The Strange Death of Moral Britain, appeared in July (Transaction).

Letter From London

by Derek Turner

The New White Moors

On February 22, an article in London's *Sunday Times* reported on a survey of white British converts to Islam. The survey was conducted by Yahya (formerly Jonathan) Birt, the son of former BBC director-general Sir John Birt. Having examined the 2001 census figures, Birt concluded that there were around 14,200 white converts to Islam in Britain, including some well-known or well-connected people.

Apart from Birt himself, well-connected converts mentioned in the *Sun-*

day Times article or subsequent articles in other journals included Emma Clark (great-granddaughter of Herbert Asquith), the earl of Yarborough, and Joe Ahmed-Dobson (son of former Labour minister Frank Dobson). Readers were also reminded of the pop star Cat Stevens, who is now known as Yusuf Islam, and other high-profile converts such as Jemima Goldsmith (daughter of Sir James Goldsmith, who married the Pakistani cricketer Imran Khan) and Yvonne Ridley, a TV journalist who, when held captive by the Taliban in Afghanistan, did a Patty Hearst. "We're all the rage," Clark said. "I hope it's not a passing fashion." The internet has now given birth to various websites (such as geocities.com/jrhalver/famous.html) that contain "trophy lists" of white converts to Islam, including, if these lists are to be believed, Gen. Charles William Buchanan Hamilton (nephew of American President James Buchanan).

This interest in Islam had attracted little attention until the *Times* article appeared. It has probably only come to public attention now because some potentially fashionable people have become involved. The stereotypical image of the British Muslim convert is that of the working-class woman living in a northern city, who has married a Pakistani shopkeeper. (According to the Islamic Foundation of the United Kingdom, 70 percent of British converts are women.) Such people attract little attention, except on those rare occasions when one notices a blaze of blue eyes or hears a Yorkshire accent emanating incongruously from behind a burqa. These women are usually regarded—when they are thought about at all—with bemusement, or maybe even with condescending pity, by their compatriots. Now, thanks to the adherence of some gilded youths, the dereliction of Christianity in Europe, and a growing respect for Islam—borne, perhaps, of fear—this patronizing attitude may be about to change.

It is very difficult to get reliable figures for white converts to Islam. Few of the available numbers appear to have any statistical basis—or, if they do, it is not made clear. For example, searching on the internet throws up, *inter alia*, the following figures: 50,000 Italian converts (*International Herald Tribune*, May 11, 2000); 20,000 Spanish (*Asia News*, June 9, 2004); 300 Irish (Galway Islamic Society); and 100,000 French (*World Tribune*, November 28, 2003). A combination of

newspaper exaggeration and Muslim self-interest may have boosted these figures wildly, however. In the wake of September 11, Muslims would like there to be many European converts to Islam, as it "legitimizes" them and makes them feel less isolated. We cannot yet tell what effect Muslim proselytizing has had in different countries, nor which countries (or brands of Christianity) seem to be most susceptible. So those of us who disapprove viscerally of such "lifestyle choices" for Westerners should not panic about converts—yet, at any rate. The clear and present danger to the West comes not from a few thousand misguided enthusiasts but from the large and restive populations of cradle Muslims that "responsible" politicians have permitted to grow in the heart of all European countries.

Yet whatever the scale, this is a discomfiting phenomenon. Why should Westerners opt to become Muslims? Why should they don the ideals, personalities, names, and mannerisms of a people whose every tradition is at odds with those of the West? Why, in particular, should they seek to join the ranks of that group which has, for so long, represented to the Western imagination the greatest, because closest, civilizational threat? We must worry about, as well as be sorry for, those of our people who have become so lost to themselves that they will consider joining the ranks of this alien wedge and should make efforts to win them back by fearlessly promoting our own values. Goethe (himself sympathetic to Islam) said that, "As to the value of conversions, God only can judge." True, but we can—and should—start thinking about the practical consequences of this growing and discomfiting phenomenon.

Converts to Islam may punch above their numerical weight if they feel they have to "prove themselves" to their newfound brothers and sisters—the proverbial "reformed whore" syndrome. Examples of those who have overidentified with their new faith include the three British converts from Catholicism arrested while fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan. More pacific converts, such as Yahya Birt, may likewise have more of an effect than many born into Islam. Their essential insecurity encourages them to make public protestations of their beliefs, and their ability to articulate the faith with white faces and in familiar accents may help, over time, to break down Occidental suspicion. Birt is modest about his usefulness in this regard, telling *Israel*

Today (June 8) that mass conversions of Britons would only happen if "an inspirational figure" like Malcolm X were to emerge. For converts are insecure, partly because they are not necessarily made to feel welcome by those who were born into the faith. One contributor to a Muslim website told of his experiences:

I am pushed too hard. I am expected to act and have the understanding, faith, and knowledge of a born Muslim . . . [P]eople forget that I only recently converted. Some people look down on me, and I feel like they are pushing me away from Islam . . . I feel alone in the journey [geocities.com/uwsmuslimsinforce/co].

In Western countries, there has long been aristocratic dilettantism around the edges of Islam, with occasional high-profile converts. Some English stately homes have "Islamic rooms" tiled in cool, abstract Moresque patterns, installed by those with Gothic tastes in the 18th and early-19th centuries, and there is a new Islamic garden at Highgrove, the prince of Wales' house in Gloucestershire (designed by the aforementioned Emma Clark). The British upper classes are well known for their "Arabist" tendencies—think of the explorer Sir Richard Burton, or Lawrence of Arabia, or Edward Fitzgerald, falling in love from his cool, restrained Suffolk home with the delightfully sensuous (and safely remote) Persian of Omar Khayyam. Such interest in aesthetics and culture has sometimes spilled over into religious belief. This romantic Arabism has even affected British foreign policy, with the Foreign Office still possessing a reputation for being pro-Arab, several Gulf wars later. One of the most important British converts today is a former diplomat, Charles Le Gai Easton, author of *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (1984), who has said that "People are put off by the wishy-washy standards of contemporary Christianity and they are looking for a religion which does not compromise too much with the modern world."

This generic interest in "the Orient" also had an effect further down the social scale. To take an everyday example, many still-extant public buildings of the 1920's and 30's were made to look like mosques—even, ironically, amusement arcades and cinemas. There is a bingo chain in the United Kingdom called

Mecca; I wonder when it will feel constrained to change its name to become more “relevant” or less “offensive.” The grimly functional Grimsby Dock Tower, near where I live, built in 1852 to open and close the lock gates of what was then the world’s busiest fishing port, has a Moorish-style minaret—a pleasingly fanciful touch on that hyperboreal coast. The idea of Islam in Europe has also long tickled literary fancies, from Gibbon’s famous musings in *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to G.K. Chesterton’s *Flying Inn*.

Such influences affected all Christian countries from the late-18th century onward. There were, of course, upper-class men and women from all European countries who romanticized and toyed with “unspoilt” cultures—like their predecessors who believed in “noble savages.” Even in the most unlikely places, however, there was an acknowledged Muslim presence. Somewhat surprisingly, there was a mosque in *déclassé* Berlin all the way through World War II, where Muslim POW’s and German converts could worship. (In April 1945, it became the eastern front, and the Volksturm dug trenches in the mosque’s grounds. A Muslim visitor to the shattered building shortly after the eastern front had moved westward recorded that the mosque was “littered with the dead bodies of Nazi youth.”)

The present conversions are not yet for personal advantage, or to avoid sanctions, although that dreadful time may come if present trends continue, as it came once for the unlucky Albanians (and Europeans captured by corsairs). The reasons are still very obscure and private. Some people are always drawn to fundamentalism and love wrapping themselves in metaphysical clouds. These will seek to identify with whichever religion seems to them to be the most self-aggrandizing and may well switch religions if one that suits them better comes along. Yahya Birt graduated in comparative religion from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London in 1996—his choice of subject providing great insight into his personality. Another convert, Sarah Joseph, who now edits a glossy Muslim “lifestyle” magazine called *Emel*, recalled:

I was a practising Roman Catholic.
I was a very serious teenager into
social issues, politics and religion.
My faith meant a lot to me and it

impacted on my social conscience.
My mother says that I was always
religious—since I was a tiny child.

Joseph’s parents were completely irreligious, so it is probably the case that her assumption of Islam was a rejection of her parents and their unsatisfactory worldview. The same probably applies to many other converts, who want to shock their parents as much as assure themselves of salvation.

The essential reason, however, is that Christianity and Western civilization are faltering. Some of those sensitive enough to see that our societies are sick are now turning to Islam because they feel that Christianity is beyond repair. Such despair is understandable enough, when you consider the angst-ridden and ignorant individuals who preponderate within our political, religious, and opinion-forming classes. *Chronicles* readers will probably find themselves in agreement with many Islamic criticisms of modern Western society. Like Rene Guenon (1885-1951), the French founder of the Traditionalist School, who converted to Islam in 1912, we can all see that there is indeed a *Crisis of the Modern World* (the name of his famous 1927 book).

It is, perhaps, understandable that a minority of young, idealistic people—searching for greater meaning than is to be found in shopping and football—might gravitate toward Islam especially as they may never have been taught about their own culture and traditions. If other Westerners are unwilling to countenance anti-intellectual submission to Allah, that is essentially because they have different tastes. Some may be too “liberal” to en-

ertain adherence to such a “judgmental” religion, but others are opposed to Westerners becoming Muslims not because Islam is contemptible—for it is not—but simply because it is not intellectually, culturally, politically, or aesthetically compatible.

If we find the idea of Sussex men or Swabians flattening themselves before an imam to be fundamentally unsettling, it is because we can see such actions in their wider historical context. We find it unsettling because we have heard of Charles Martel and Don John of Austria. It is because we have heard of Vlad the Impaler and the Field of Blackbirds or have fought in our boyish imaginations with Capt. John Smith against the glittering, swarthy hordes. We are moved by the grand thought of that emperor of an empire shrunk to a few suburbs, praying fervently alone at Midnight Mass in that cavernous church on that terrible night in 1453 and going out the next day to die fighting among his men, his body swept away unnoticed in the Byzantine wrack. We know how precious the West is because we know how close it has come to being swept away by this very same force that is now pressing at our doors. It is because we know enough, and feel enough, about who “we” are that we can see that Islam is irreconcilable with all that constitutes the West. Expanding that historical consciousness, and that sense of special glory, to rescue those of our people who are adrift in the multicultural ocean is the ultimate antidote to our oldest, newly confident opponent.

Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, published in London.

Song of the Well-worn Hoe by Ruth Moose

Sometimes my name
and reputation is pronounced
another way I am not. I am plain,
everyday, stick to my job and do it.
There is no frivolity in my simple life.
I am simple, straight and strong.
My mother was a sharp
stone, my father a trimmed stick. All I know
is blade business. Hard rows are all I have
in my day. I work in the slim
and narrow. Alone. Though my
neck is at least elegant, I know
the end is the means.

CHRISTIANITY

Omnigendered Christianity

by Mark D. Tooley

By some measures, the influence of feminist theology peaked in the 1990's. It is still around, however, acting as a supporting pillar for liberal religion's latest preoccupation: the elimination of "gender."

Feminist theologians and clergy convened in March 2004 for an annual "Women and the Word" conference at Boston University's School of Theology, challenging masculine images of God, supporting abortion rights, urging acceptance of same-sex "marriage" and a new "omnigender" and "polymorphous paradigm" in society that is undergirded by a "gender"-neutral theology.

"Women and the Word" is organized by the Boston seminary's Anna Howard Shaw Center, which is devoted to claiming the "power of women's voices." The seminary is a United Methodist institution, though its students come from many denominations.

Among the most provocative speakers was lesbian activist Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. "Women doing theology creates heresy, we were told [in seminary]," recalled Mollenkott, author of the recently published *Omnigender: A Trans-religious Approach*, which is aimed at "transgendered" people.

Indeed, this allegation of heresy is somewhat true, Mollenkott (a former "fundamentalist" and now an Episcopalian) admitted as she lamented that "androcentric theology is the center of orthodoxy": "Women have introduced 'heresy' . . . [as they challenged] militarism, racism, ableism, classism, ageism, colonialism and guilty-ridden theology that has ruled for a very long time."

Mollenkott condemned the traditional "Christian claim that we alone possess the way to salvation." Feminists, instead, emphasize that everything about God is "metaphorical." And, to combat injustice, unhelpful metaphors that portray God as a male, all-powerful, rich king, lord, and master must be overthrown.

"We said all metaphors are socially constructed. None are ultimately true," Mollenkott explained. "Logically, we can't say metaphors of other religions are not true." She stressed that "faith may be celebrated through a variety of religious experiences."

Quoting another theologian, Mollenkott warned that "worldwide mayhem is caused by idolatrous allegiance to male metaphors."

A major barrier to justice is a "binary society" that insists on "gender constructs" and "exaggerated differences between men and women," Mollenkott complained. To confront this, she is pushing for an "omnigender society to correct gender assumptions."

The dominant paradigm in society insists there are just two sexes, Mollenkott rued. The transgender movement is a protest against that assumption. "How will we define gender?" she wondered with glee, once the transgender or omnigender mind-set prevails. "Will it be by chromosomes or how you pee?"

"Binary gender constructs are wrong on every count. It doesn't account for cross dressers. They are compelled to do it. They must do it. Their creator must have made them that way."

Mollenkott mentioned a friend of hers who describes her sex as "otherwise." She urged human rights for "every gender and sexual orientation." "Let people be who they feel they are," she implored, calling this new gender understanding "polymorphism."

"Instead of correcting Her [sic] mistakes, let's understand what they're intended to tell us," Mollenkott enthused. "Apparently the Creator likes diversity a lot more than most people do." Indeed, she warned the opposition not to question the omnigender approach, as "What God has made clear you must not make profane."

Mollenkott lashed out at the "religious right" for touting a constitutional amendment defining marriage. "Access to civil marriage is a part of the right to pursue happiness which our Constitution guarantees," she asserted, though it seemed to be the Declaration of Independence that she was actually quoting.

"Religion must stop making sexuality a focus point," Mollenkott declared. "Jesus didn't do it. Moses didn't do it. Muhammad didn't do it." She called for sex edu-

cation for children that focuses on sexual orientation and "safe sex."

"Stop circling around the few Scriptures that condemn people," Mollenkott implored, as she urged "transreligious solidarity."

Sounding a similar theme (but with more careful language), United Methodist Bishop Susan Morrison said, "We need to hear new melodies that God is sending our way." "More and more people are having trouble reconciling our faith with their own experiences," Morrison fretted. "The church is trying to hold folks to traditional values that disconnect with reality today."

"We've become outmoded, irrelevant, and often obstructionist," Morrison said of the traditional Church. We need to "dance with the light" instead of "sulking judgmentalism."

Morrison is a prominent advocate of homosexuality within her denomination, and her comments seemed aimed in that direction. "Why aren't we excited and positive about change in the world instead of sulking in a corner?" she asked.

"We're laying on legalisms that create the disconnect," she continued. "Britney Spears is more threatening to marriage and covenant than two people of the same gender who have been together for 50 years."

The bishop complained that "Our creedal issues become means of control and exclusion," as she urged openness to "new realities."

"There's a whole church full of transgendered people," Morrison noted of a congregation under her jurisdiction. "They're beyond gay. They're leading us."

Morrison fretted about "litmus tests for seminary professors" and the embarrassment of spending so "much time on sex issues" while the real issues are being neglected by the Church, such as the "growing gap between the rich and the poor."

Feminist theologian Mary Hunt, a Roman Catholic lesbian activist, hailed the many female clergy present, such as Morrison, and announced with a smile, "My ordination day is pending!"

Hunt lamented an "erosion of reproductive choices," citing proposed bans on partial-birth abortion. And she bemoaned the "demeaning debate" on same-sex "marriage," a practice she described as a universal "right."

Hunt also hailed feminist progress in the churches, citing the role of feminist theologians in challenging “structures of lordship” such as “heterosexism” and colonialism. She hailed a societal shift away from a “Christian base” to growing religious pluralism. And she cited progress in the ordination of women and lesbians in some denominations, including a lesbian minister in the United Methodist Church who recently defied a church prohibition on homosexual clergy.

“In the Roman Catholic Church lesbian priests would make children safer,” Hunt opined. She condemned her church for using women such as Harvard professor Mary Ann Glendon to argue against abortion rights and same-sex “marriage.” “The Vatican has learned that pitting women against women works,” Hunt warned.

Even within feminist circles, Hunt complained, poor women are excluded, “transgender” women are still “on the outside,” and too much of the conversation is in English.

Joining Hunt in urging greater sexual and theological freedom was United Church of Christ minister Susan Davies, who teaches at Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine. Davies described herself as a “reflective crone,” incest survivor, divorced woman, and out-of-the-closet lesbian.

Davies underwent her crowning ceremony, a Wiccan rite-of-passage ritual for middle-aged women, at age 60. As a young woman, she had felt shame for having been a childhood victim of incestuous abuse. “Structures in society have condoned and permitted such assaults,” she regretted.

Divorced in 1971, Davies had “internalized her homophobia.” She eventually embraced lesbianism after being “closeted” for many years. “Closets are lovely places for storage but not places for spiritual growth,” she commented with a grin. “We as women bring a sexuality that threatens the church and threatens male religious authority.”

Combating male religious authority and symbols was also a theme for Korean-American Hae Sun Kim. “What an angry woman I was in those days!” recounted Kim, who is a United Methodist minister and a consultant with the New York-based United Methodist Women’s Division. She was recalling her message to the “Women and the Word” conference of 16 years ago.

In seminary, Kim had learned how to “deconstruct the patriarchy of the church” and relied on the “hermeneu-

tics of suspicion.” She is now “glad” those days are over and that “anger is now no longer consuming” her.

The world has not changed, however, and the same “discrimination” continues against women and minorities. Kim now conducts empowerment workshops and holds on to a vision of the “new heaven and the new earth.”

Presbyterian minister Unzu Lee, also Korean-American, wondered about the effectiveness of traditional Christian spiritual practices, especially reliance on “written text and preaching.” “Scripture is the site of our struggle,” Lee said. “By giving such authority to written text, we lose our ability to intuit and listen to signs around us and be compassionate.”

Lee wonders “if Scripture is helpful in sexual orientation,” expressing her doubts about the Bible. Just celebrating the empowerment of women in the Church is not sufficient, she warned, if women are not working against racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia.

“We are not doing a good enough job in fighting those who are corrupting the language,” Lee warned. Specifically, she was concerned about conservative women using the language of “diversity” to argue for the inclusion of a pro-life perspective in the women’s caucus of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

United Church of Christ minister June Goudey also had doubts about scriptural authority. “Heresy means choice,” she noted, observing that heretics were simply people who had made different choices. “Women have been called heretical, but the choices we’ve made have saved our lives,” Goudey enthused. “I explore what is my truth and I follow it.”

“I can speak my truth, but it may not be everybody’s truth,” Goudey added. “Feminism can’t say it all.” She asked the audience to consider images in the Church that have helped to shape racism and homophobia. For example, “Look at our liturgy.”

Observing the subversive nature of “Women and the Word” and of feminist theology in general, Goudey concluded: “A lot of people don’t want us to be here. They fear diversity.”

Eliminating sex distinction, justifying exotic sexualities, and interpreting Christianity as merely an instrument for overthrowing perceived social oppressions are all major themes in America’s liberal seminaries. In many cases, those seminaries have ceased to be training schools for Christian pastors and have become

therapeutic stations for self-discovery and training academies for radical social change.

If the crowd at “Women and the Word” was any reflection, however, the preoccupations of liberationist religion will fade as the generation of the 1960’s and 70’s retires to its omnigender Valhalla, freeing the seminaries to return to their original purposes.

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WAR

Iraq: Whither the United States?

by Doug Bandow

Concerned about declining confidence in his administration’s policy in Iraq—and, equally important, falling support for his reelection campaign—President George W. Bush gave the first of several planned speeches on Iraq to an audience at the Army War College. Alas, he offered the usual platitudes about providing Iraq “a free, representative government” and occupying that country only for “as long as necessary.” He promised that “Iraqis will govern their own affairs”—except, apparently, such peripheral matters as changing occupation rules and blocking U.S. military action.

U.S. forces will not be coming home soon. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz recently told Congress: “I think it’s entirely possible that U.S. troops could be stationed in Iraq for years.” At best, “we will be able to let [the Iraqis] be in the front lines and us be in a supporting position.” Yet the Pentagon has developed contingency plans for inserting another 25,000 soldiers, should the security situation deteriorate. Unfortunately, the President’s warning that “Terrorists are likely to become more active and more brutal” is nearly his only prediction that has proved to be accurate.

Suicide bombings are not the only barrier to progress. Consider the problems leading up to the creation of the provisional Iraqi government. Onetime administration ally Ahmed Chalabi, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, was accused of being a corrupt Iranian spy. The head of the Iraqi Gov-

erning Council was assassinated. The Abu Ghraib prison abuses sapped already declining Iraqi support for the United States. Reconstruction work lagged because of violence and insecurity. Fighting continued in the holy Shiite cities of Karbala and Najaf; the United States retreated from her promise to arrest radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. American, Italian, and South Korean hostages were beheaded before a global audience.

Until Iraq possesses a government seen as legitimate by Iraqis, which is unlikely until free elections are held, nationalists will continue to make common cause with Baathists and terrorists against American and allied forces. (Even moderate Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani says the interim regime, though a step forward, lacks "electoral legitimacy.") Unfortunately, the death toll will continue to rise. There will be more dancing Iraqis celebrating the killing of more coalition soldiers and civilians.

How should we respond? The tough-minded advocate using whatever force is necessary, no matter how many Iraqis die, to maintain order; we should have leveled Fallujah, a city of 300,000, for instance. Michael Rubin of the American Enterprise Institute says that we still should do so, despite the nominal return of sovereignty to Iraq. We cannot, however—that is not what America is about, especially if our professed goal is to promote liberty and democracy in Iraq.

The goal of establishing a democratic, humane, Western-oriented Iraq, is surely worthy. It is also likely an illusion.

George Downs and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita of New York University considered 35 cases and concluded that in only one did a "full-fledged, stable democracy . . . emerge within 10 years" after U.S. intervention. The oft-celebrated cases of Germany and Japan differ dramatically from Iraq: Both were real countries, with a sense of nationhood, relatively homogeneous populations, and democratic experience. That does not mean Iraq cannot become a democracy. Washington, however, is unlikely to achieve that end through force of arms.

Of course, it has long been the mantra of the Bush administration and its supporters that there is a lot of good news in Iraq that is not being reported. For instance, the harbors are being cleaned, reports columnist Mark Steyn. The occupation authority put out one cheery fact per day—the issuance of grants to promote women in leadership, the inaugu-

ration of new economic regulatory bodies, and more.

There is little good news for Washington, however. House-to-house fighting in Fallujah and multiple risings in Shiite cities in April constituted a violent leap beyond improvised explosive devices and snipings.

Don't worry, proclaims columnist Jack Kelly: "If we stand firm, victory is all but certain." If so, it seems to be a victory that Iraqis do not want.

A Gallup poll conducted in March and April found that, while Iraqis were gratified by Saddam Hussein's ouster, 57 percent of them wanted U.S. forces to leave immediately and an astonishing 52 percent believed that attacks on U.S. soldiers are at least "sometimes" justified. A plurality said that the United States had "done more harm than good." Strip out the small Kurdish population, almost unanimous in its backing of the United States, and the numbers are far worse. "Go home," said 61 percent of Shiites, 65 percent of Sunnis, and 75 percent of Baghdad residents.

That poll was conducted before the extended violence in Fallujah and Najaf and the scandal at Abu Ghraib prison, which undoubtedly have driven America's negatives even higher.

Alas, the Bush administration's options are shrinking. It has continually breathed fire regarding deadly insurgents and terrorists, only to retreat each time after achieving little more than bad publicity. For instance, occupation officials long threatened the Sunni insurgency with destruction, to no obvious effect. "This will not be tolerated," said occupation head Paul Bremer of al-Sadr—who, months later, remained at large with his militia members still battling U.S. forces. When amnesty was offered to his militia if they would stop fighting, al-Sadr avoided arrest while winning a two-thirds approval rating from Iraqis. After promising to retaliate for the killing of four contract security personnel in Fallujah, the United States besieged the city, then temporized for weeks, and finally pulled back in favor of former Baathist generals. Can anyone spell *appeasement*?

The United States is desperately enlisting Iraqi security forces, but insurgents are targeting them, too. Nor are the men trained and paid by Washington trustworthy; a quarter of the Iraqi police ran off or joined the rioters during the civil uprisings. In Fallujah, civil-defense personnel may have led the four Ameri-

can contractors into a trap, while the police stayed in their walled compound as the Americans were being murdered and their bodies desecrated. The new Iraqi army simply refused to fight in Fallujah. Iraqi forces have proved to be no more reliable in battles since then.

The transition to Iraqi sovereignty has proved to be equally difficult. Bremer's occupation authority changed strategies month by month. President Bush was left to hope for success through a U.N.-orchestrated rescue. Yet confused charges and denials about who would be appointed interim president and prime minister left it unclear that anyone was in charge. The leaders ultimately selected by the U.S.-U.N. process were respectable, but lacked popular authority.

The constitution, largely developed by the United States, is a worthy document—but it is unlikely ever to be put into practice. Representatives of the majority Shiites on the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council evidently agreed to the constitution only to speed elections, after which, if the Shiites take control as expected, they will revise it. Sharp disagreements between Kurds and other Iraqis over promised Kurdish autonomy were barely papered over.

U.S.-imposed limits on the sovereignty of the interim Iraqi government combined with contradictory statements about whether Baghdad could send U.S. forces home—after Washington had expressed its expectation of maintaining more than 100,000 troops in Iraq through at least 2006—undercut the perceived authority of the new Iraqi government. Under pressure from Tony Blair, among others, President Bush publicly promised that Baghdad would possess "full sovereignty," but U.S. officials have indicated that everything from security to oil will be beyond the new government's authority. Plans for a huge American embassy suggest that the Bush administration expects Baghdad to be little more than a puppet regime. This ensures that indigenous insurgents and outside terrorists will continue to have an excuse, however cynical, to ply their deadly trade—and that enough Iraqis will back them to spread the violence.

Hostile attitudes are especially likely to grow if the United States leaves forces in Iraq for years, as suggested by Wolfowitz, and especially if Washington does "whatever it takes" to preserve U.S. control. Brutal suppression of Iraqis might deter further brutal murders of Americans, but

it is more likely to encourage additional attacks. U.S. forces have raided homes, arrested suspects, and encircled entire cities in barbed wire. The resistance never ebbed. The assault on Fallujah united some Shiites and Sunnis, an ominous development.

Perhaps America has not been ruthless enough. Ruthlessness, however, inevitably afflicts the innocent as well as the guilty, creating yet more anger. A year ago, U.S. forces killed and wounded some 80 demonstrators in Fallujah. American troops killed nine Iraqi policemen chasing a suspect toward a U.S. checkpoint in Fallujah later last year. These might be inevitable accidents of war, but they should leave no one surprised that hostility toward Washington reaches well beyond disaffected former Baathists.

The consequences of the occupation do not stop at Iraq's borders. Unfortunately, even as Al Qaeda has been badly damaged by allied military and security operations over the last two years, a host of smaller groups around the world have been created or rejuvenated. And Iraq has become a potent recruiting vehicle for them. In a new report, the International Institute for Strategic Studies concludes: "Galvanized by Iraq if compromised by Afghanistan, al Qaeda remains a viable and effective network of networks." Indeed, adds the IISS, "over 18,000 potential terrorists are at large with recruitment accelerating on account of Iraq." The President may be right to describe Iraq as the "central front" in the War on Terror, but it is so only as a result of the U.S. invasion and occupation.

A recent Pew Research Center poll found that, "A year after the war in Iraq, discontent with America and its policies has intensified rather than diminished" around the globe. For instance, large majorities of Jordanians, Moroccans, and Pakistanis, whose governments support the United States, view America unfavorably. Huge majorities believe Washington to be insincere in its War on Terror.

Last year, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld presciently asked whether Washington was killing terrorists faster than it was creating them. When it comes to Iraq, at least, the answer seems to be no.

Washington must develop an exit strategy—not a closet strategy, now advanced by Paul Wolfowitz, to hide U.S. forces on bases behind high walls once more Iraqi cops are on the streets. Of course, even

after multiple terror bombings, Washington cannot pull out precipitously no matter how much it would like to do so. And the United States has an interest in making a real hand-off to Iraqis as smooth as possible.

The United States needs to understand what is essential for American security and what is not. An Iraq in which the harbors have been dredged is not. An Iraq in which more schools have opened is not. Even an Iraq with Western-style elections and liberties is not.

All of these are desirable. None is essential, however, nor necessarily attainable at an acceptable cost in terms of lives and resources, burden on the military, and other deleterious consequences—most notably, the encouragement of more terrorism.

Rather, the criterion of success is simple: Is America more secure? She is if an Iraqi government comes to power that cooperates in identifying, fighting, and eliminating Al Qaeda forces and helps to dampen Islamic jihadist sentiments.

America is not safer if Baghdad traffics with terrorists. She is not more secure if Iraq offers sanctuary to Al Qaeda operatives and facilities. She is not better off if Baghdad creates weapons of mass destruction.

Making Iraq more democratic will not necessarily make America more secure. Democratic governments representing those hostile majorities in Jordan, Morocco, and Pakistan would endanger America. Democracy in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere also likely would bring to power regimes that would wish the United States ill. So too, perhaps, in Iraq.

Washington should work with Iraqis to develop a firm, accelerated timeline for elections, full restoration of Iraqi sovereignty, promulgation of a permanent constitution, and complete U.S. troop withdrawal. The timing will be somewhat arbitrary, but the process cannot be allowed to drag on. Washington should begin drawing down its military presence now, with the objective of removing all of its occupation forces—while leaving in place any advisors or liaison officers necessary to aid in dealing with Al Qaeda—by mid-2005 at the latest.

Could Iraq hurtle toward a bloody breakdown? Perhaps, but that situation threatens even with an American presence. Indeed, U.S. garrisons and patrols risk inflaming conflict. Should widespread civil, religious, or ethnic strife impend, it would be better for Washington to be out

of, rather than in, the picture.

Could radical Shiites attempt to establish a theocratic state? Perhaps, though most Iraqis—Shiite, Sunni, and Kurd—appear to favor a more secular system. And, as occupier, the United States could ill afford to reject a duly elected government. Better to set only the truly essential bottom line: no terrorist connections and no WMD's.

Could jihadists claim a moral victory from an American departure? Perhaps, but they will achieve a clear strategic victory if America stays. With Iraq, the United States has created an entirely new battlefield against forces, Baathist remnants and Iraqi nationalists, that otherwise would ignore America. For Al Qaeda and related groups that focus on the United States, the Iraqi occupation has created yet another terrorist excuse and recruitment aid.

President Bush says that he plans to "finish the work of the fallen," apparently for however long that might take. Even Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry takes the "we cannot fail" position, proclaiming: "No matter who is elected president in November, we will persevere" in helping "Iraqis build a stable, peaceful and pluralistic society." And a number of outside analysts still talk of an occupation for years, decades, or even longer.

Many of the latter, however, predicted that resistance would cease after the fall of Saddam Hussein—then, after his capture. They also believed that Iraqi oil would pay for Iraqi reconstruction. They are the people who promised that most U.S. forces would come home last summer and suggested that democracy would sweep the Middle East following America's invasion. Their claims that an extended U.S. occupation, if only a little tougher and longer, will succeed are no more credible.

America must not cut and run, it is routinely said, and that is true. The alternative, however, must not be to reinforce failure, accepting ever-increasing costs that make a future policy change even more difficult. It is in America's interest to get out; Washington must develop a plan to leave on its own terms, before it is forced out.

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Montage Mirage

Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* is shallow, manipulative, and malicious. It is also the slickest piece of cinematic propaganda since Sergei Eisenstein made *Battleship Potemkin* in 1925. Like Eisenstein's film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*'s political impact is proving devastatingly effective. Tens of millions of people have seen it. Many are members of Moore's choir, of course, and they are already in the bag. It is Moore's success with the undecideds that is proving his cinematic mettle. Ordinary folks enter the theater uneasy about our Iraqi adventure and emerge two hours later raving for a pull-out pronto.

If George W. Bush's presidency goes under this November, Moore will be able to crow that he did his part. This will be a shame—not because Bush hasn't earned his walking papers but because the demerits Moore brandishes with such blimpish glee are either minor or untrue. Worse, he flatly ignores the bull elephant in the room. The unexamined tusker is the neocon notion that we had to go to war to make the Middle East safe for Israel, our 51st state. It is odd that Moore should have chosen to ignore the beast since his 2003 book, *Dude, Where's My Country?* confronts it with the subtlety of a jackhammer:

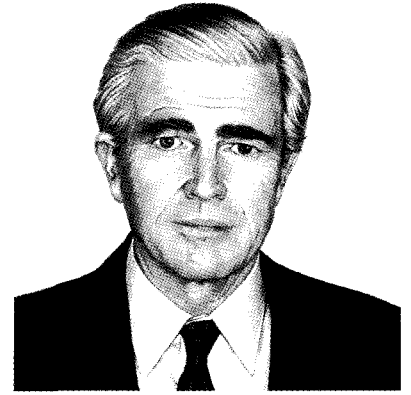
It might be good to find out why hundreds of millions of people on three continents, stretching from Morocco on the Atlantic to the Philippines in the Pacific, are so pissed off about Israel . . . [and] the perceived notion that we Americans are supporting Israel in its oppression of the Palestinian people. Now, where did those Arabs come up with an idea like that? Maybe it was when that Palestinian child looked up in the air and saw an American Apache helicopter firing a missile into his baby sister's bedroom just before she was blown into a hundred bits. Touchy, touchy! . . . Is that any reason to dance in the streets when the World Trade Center falls to the ground?

You will look in vain for any such re-

marks in Moore's film. He prefers to have us believe that all of Bush's military decisions since September 11 have been driven by his relations with the Saudi government and the Bin Laden family. He claims the Bush family has been supported by the sheiks to the tune of \$1.4 billion. This, he libelously reasons, renders their loyalty to America suspect. There is no question that the Bush-Saud connection is unseemly, but it is important to point out that \$1.4 billion Moore cites is money the kingdom has invested over the years in the Carlyle Group, a corporation on whose board Bush Sr. sits. The family has prospered by this connection, but hardly to the degree Moore wants us to believe. If Saudi money controlled Bush Jr.'s decisions, he certainly would not have gone to war against Iraq. The Saudis argued vigorously against doing so, and with good reason. They believed it would destabilize the region and encourage the citizens of Arab countries to rise up against their corrupt masters, including their greedy selves. And, if the war finally does go well for the United States, there is the prospect of a revitalized Iraqi oil industry overseen by Americans. There could hardly be a worse outcome for the House of Saud.

Moore also insinuates that Bush personally directed that the members of the Bin Laden family living in America be flown home two days after the World Trade Center attack without submitting to interrogation. Not true: Richard Clarke gave the order to evacuate them, but not before they were questioned.

Why does Moore prefer to offer us distortions rather than facts to explain September 11? The answer probably lies with his film's distributor, Miramax, a company led by Harvey Weinstein, a strong supporter of Israel (although, truth to tell, not a member of the Ariel Sharon fan club). Moore's iconoclastic truth-telling, it seems, goes only so far. This is too bad. Most of Moore's vast audience will take what he shows them at face value. If Moore really wanted to change things rather than indulge his splenetic hatred for Bush, he would have made clear that we are currently locked into a foreign policy that will continue to alienate us from our natural allies and expose us and Isra-



Fahrenheit 9/11

Produced by Miramax Films
and Dog Eat Dog Films

Written and directed by

Michael Moore

Distributed by Lions Gate Films, Inc.

el to ever-greater peril. Since John Kerry voted for the war and has repeatedly declared his unstinting support for Israel, right or wrong, it is clear that, should he win in November, he will not change the course Bush has set for the region.

The *9/11* of Moore's title might be better understood as a proportion than the date of Al Qaeda's attack on us. The film is nine parts bologna and two parts fact, cleverly mixed to create a combustible concoction. Moore has learned the lesson Eisenstein taught film propagandists. When making an argument, montage trumps reasoned discourse every time. Eisenstein demonstrated that individual film shots can be made to say anything a director wishes: He merely has to assemble them in the right order. Film an actress staring at the camera with a neutral expression. Then splice in a shot of a man being marched to the gallows before and after her close-up. Audiences will be convinced the lady is struggling bravely to contain her anguish at the prospect of losing her husband. Take the very same shot of the actress and sandwich it between shots of garden flowers and children playing. Viewers will marvel at how wonderfully she expresses maternal contentment. Call it the montage mirage. Stalin and Hitler understood this. Both tyrants poured extraordinary amounts of state funds into filmmaking in order to propagandize their unsophisticated audiences on a deep emotional level where rational analysis simply cannot compete with cinematic emotionalism.

Moore is working in this tradition. Consider the following sequence, composed of shots, each factual within its own frame. Edited together, however, they become thoroughly misleading, not to mention inflammatory.

We first watch President Bush announcing his determination to attack Iraq when Saddam Hussein refuses to leave Baghdad. This is followed by a montage of joyful children cavorting in the playgrounds of this tranquil city of contented souls. Then we see the nighttime bombing on March 19, 2003, as Moore, in voice-over, remarks that Iraq is "a nation that never attacked us." From here, we meet some tank crews who are getting pumped up for their phase of the assault. They are playing an American ditty that includes these shouted lyrics over a pummeling rap beat: "The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire. / We don't need no water. / Let the motherf---er burn; / burn motherf---er, burn." Then as the tanks begin blasting and dozing buildings, we cut to Donald Rumsfeld remarking on the restraint of the assault. "The care that goes into it, the humanity," he trails off dreamily in a peroration of the purest, high-grade p.r. b.s. Next shot: Out of the rubble of a collapsed building emerges a screaming Iraqi woman.

Wholly unimpressed by America's care and humanity, she piercingly calls upon Allah to heap bloody vengeance on her country's liberators. Then we cut to a brief shot of the flight-suited Bush, just after landing on the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln*, a "Mission Accomplished" poster prominently displayed in the background. This is followed by a scene some months after the war was supposed to be over. As American soldiers leave a building, a car bomb explodes. In the chaotic aftermath, horribly wounded men scream in terror and agony as others rush to their aid.

The sequence is bitterly and brilliantly sardonic, placing side-by-side American delusions about the war and scenes of its inescapable horror. Still, questions arise. Weren't those buildings we bombed Hussein's government headquarters and his infamous palaces? How close were they to schools and playgrounds? Who would have thought pre-war Iraq was the peaceable kingdom Moore portrays? Could he be ignoring inconvenient facts such as Hussein's penchant for terrorizing his own people, his open support for suicide-bombing in Israel, his harboring of international terrorists, his negotiating

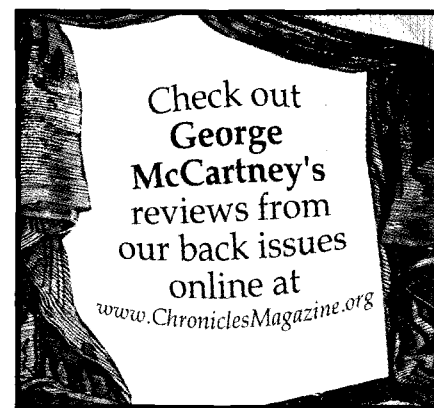
with North Korea to obtain nuclear missiles, and his plotting to assassinate President George H.W. Bush? As for the rap-driven vulgarities among our tank corps, would it be amiss to suggest that these young men were scared? That, like soldiers at all times and places, they were seeking to muffle their fears, along with their finer feelings, beneath a thuggish beat? After all, indulging misgivings and moral sensitivity on the battlefield is a good way to get yourself killed. Tellingly, Moore contrives to ignore all the American troops who considered themselves to be rescuing Iraqis from their viciously oppressive government. And then there is Rumsfeld. Disingenuous? Well, the fox rarely turns vegetarian in the henhouse. This does not mean he always lies, however. One of the ongoing problems of the occupation has been the decision to keep civilian casualties minimal and, further, not to crush the insurgents with attacks that would certainly wreak a far-wider slaughter of innocents than has taken place to date. Finally, Bush's airborne triumphalism may have been arrogant and, worse, stupid, but it must be conceded that he has always made a point of saying that the conflict would continue and the costs in blood could be extreme at times. This is the unavoidable cost of war—any war.

Why let facts obscure your point? Moore is willing to say anything, however foolish or contradictory, to drive Bush from office. Having reviled the President for invading Iraq, he chides him for not sending enough troops. Having charged him with not heeding intelligence concerning Al Qaeda's plans to use commercial planes in a terror attack, Moore then accuses the administration of trying to scare the public with its post-September 11 terror alerts in order to justify a widespread abrogation of civil rights. And on and on in the same vein. He plays a clip of Bush being notified of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center while he was reading to schoolchildren in Florida. This piece of film is shown in semi-slow-motion to make the President look more than usually witless. In voice-over, Moore comments with leaden sarcasm, "Not knowing what to do, with no one telling him what to do, Mr. Bush sat there reading *My Pet Goat*" for another seven minutes. Well, what was he supposed to do? Vault over the kiddies, slap some missiles onto Air Force One and personally... do what? Where? How? It is generally thought good sense to have an address

before launching your weapons.

But why carp? Moore's montage of half-truths and outright lies will prevail, and, in all likelihood, he will have done his part to make John Kerry our next president. If so, we can expect our foreign policy to continue essentially unchanged. Only the slogans will be different. If Moore really wanted to change our direction, he should have exposed how Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and the neoconservatives inside and outside the administration vigorously promoted the Iraq invasion as part of their larger plan to suppress all of Israel's enemies—Syria, Iran, Libya, Egypt, and Jordan—in the daft belief that America can foster capitalistic democracies throughout the region and thus bring peace and prosperity to all concerned. Would that it were so. As we can see today, however, their notions were bankrupt from start. Israel and America have never been more in danger from the Islamic world.

As disappointing as Moore's film is, it does contain some lively political theater. Knowing that all but one of our noble Congresspeople voted to give President Bush authority to go to war and that only one of them has a son fighting in Iraq, he stands outside the Capitol and ambushes our tribunes, offering them Armed Forces recruitment literature. "Maybe your son or daughter would like to enlist," he says with faux innocence. Some give him icy I'd-like-to-kill-you smiles, others duck his camera. One turns tail and literally runs away. It is a good joke to play on these hypocrites. An infinitely better one, however, would have been to ask them about their unswerving support for Ariel Sharon's incredibly dangerous encroachments on Palestinian land. Would our officeholders like to send their children to help Sharon build his wall against his troublesome neighbors and, perhaps, erect a few more settlements while they are at it?



Gentlemen Prefer C's

According to a recent front-page story in the *New York Times*, the latest innovation of a particularly ambitious segment of the upwardly mobile American middle class is the replacement of the old-fashioned summer camp with getting-into-college camp. In proportion as the *Times* is ignorant of One Big Thing, its editors are highly knowledgeable about many small ones, among which the modern education rat race ranks high. It seems prudent, therefore, for the rest of us to listen up and pay attention to what they have to say.

Summer camp as it used to be—lake-side in the mountains, with enforced training in swimming, boating, shooting, equestrianism, tennis, fishing, hiking, wilderness survival, and singing silly songs around the campfire—was as American as Huckleberry Finn and Nick Adams, though both escaped its disciplining formalities by lighting out on their own for the territory ahead. I was spared them myself, being given the run of a 200-acre Green Mountains farm instead. Nevertheless, the idea of the summer camp of yore yielding place to an intellectual boot camp for neutered nerds from the suburbs is, to me, as shocking as the spectacle of a lovely agricultural valley turned into a silicon one. This newest Upward Bound program for what its patrons themselves would call the “overprivileged” is simply another training course for the Long Island Olympics. Is there no satisfaction in life for the elite (or aspirants to it) beyond cutthroat meritocratic competition for place, preference, and riches? Are the most intelligent human beings really no more than disembodied minds at work according to cybernetic principles? Was the motto of the ancients, *Mens sanis in corpore sano*, a menacing prophecy of Naziism or a formula for developing the good, the balanced citizen? Has the unbought grace of life become totally eclipsed in our time? Is American society rotting from the head down, like a fish? When a civilization no longer can produce wholly formed men and women at the top but only troglodytes, no matter how “intelligent,” it is doomed.

We call it “higher education,” but the thing is scarcely that. Rather, like the el-

ementary and secondary education that precedes it, it is fake education, developed from positively anti-educational principles. The purpose of post-secondary education was never to outfit a class of narrow-minded sharklings with all the tricks necessary to seize and devour what they consider their just deserts but to graduate cultivated Christian men and women, bred to social deference and the habit of command: fit to accept their place in an established upper class, in the absence of which civilization devolves into society in the merely anthropological sense. If there were nothing more to a civilized person than a high IQ, developed technical skills, and a ruthless competitive instinct, civilization would be a cheap commodity indeed, rather than the precious and perishable thing that it is. That, however, is—whether fortunately or unfortunately—not the case.

The Spanish-American War was the direct (though infinitely more successful) forebear of the calamitous Iraqi war now being fought. Yet, while the war in the Philippines produced atrocities far exceeding those of Abu Ghraib, the Cuban campaign had its gallant aspect, provided in considerable part by Theodore Roosevelt's volunteer Rough Rider regiment—which, so far as I am able to recall, has no parallel in subsequent American warfare. The Rough Riders included recruits from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, and clubs such as the Knickerbocker of New York and the Somerset of Boston. (Hamilton Fish, Jr., the ex-captain of the Columbia crew, was among the first casualties on the slog from Daiquiri over to Kettle Hill.) It included as well hunters, ex-sheriffs, cowboys, mining prospectors, and mountain men from the Western territories—uncouth frontiersman who had hardly suspicioned the existence of anything like a Fish, a Page, or a Channing. Roosevelt was initially pleased by the refusal of the bluebloods to lord it over their social inferiors by demanding commissions for themselves, being content instead to serve under whatever roughneck they were assigned to; after the regiment had returned stateside and been mustered out, he was delighted to be able to claim that not a single man had backed out after



volunteering for service nor failed to do his entire duty. As for himself, Roosevelt explains in *The Rough Riders*,

During the year preceding the outbreak of the Spanish War, I was assistant secretary of the Navy. While my party was in opposition, I had preached, with all the fervor and zeal I possessed, our duty to intervene in Cuba and to take this opportunity of driving the Spaniard from the Western World. Now that my party had come to power, I felt it incumbent on me, by word and deed, to do all I could to secure the carrying out of the policy in which I so heartily believed; and from the beginning I had determined that, if a war came, somehow or other, I was going to the front.

Imagine Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, or Douglas Feith forming a regiment and taking it to the Iraqi front! Or a modern-day Harvard or Columbia graduate volunteering for service with it. Really, it is unimaginable. Probably fewer than ten percent of American males with college degrees have ever handled a firearm. America in 1898 was still a whole society, raising up whole men. The difference between then and now is, to some degree, the difference between summer camp and college camp.

I have written sometime within the last year that I had always been a defender of the gentleman's C until George W. Bush entered the White House. Since then, I have reflected that, had Bush graduated from Yale with an A-plus average, he would have been no less dangerous as president (and even quite possibly more so) than he has proved himself in fact to be. TR, in spite of his intellectual

brilliance and his greatness as a man, as president was almost as wrongheaded as W., overall. And it is worth noting, moreover, that there is no reason to believe that Roosevelt's formidable intellect, encyclopedic learning, and literary ability are relatable to the report cards he received from Harvard.

I am speaking here of a college education, not a postgraduate or professional one. Obviously, it is the duty, as well as the business, of law, medical, business, mining, agricultural schools, and the like to accept the best applicants, give them the most rigorous training, and graduate competent and responsible professionals. (Although lawyers, in particular, should be humanists as well; while Americans of a certain age can recall their general internist having played the cello and collected works of art, and the music for their Sunday church service being tastefully selected by a Wall Street banker.) As for the humanities, postgraduate work in history, literature, languages, and the sciences ought, of course, to be conducted according to the standards of professional scholarship. But, as to undergraduate education? *To hell with the grade-grubbers!* Admissions departments should be firmly directed to discriminate unapologetically and refer them directly to the professional schools. Where the colleges are concerned—the Ivy League colleges in particular—the inflexible rule should be: Only dilettantes need apply.

Because it is from dilettantism that civilization arises and on which it depends. Civilization, in the highest sense, is play; and civilized play is play in the highest sense of the word, as art is play. I do not say that the creation of civilization, and of art, is not the result of rigorous and exacting labor, involving blood, sweat, and skill as well as genius; but that the end of art and civilization is itself not rigorous. (Aquinas beautifully defined art as “reason in making,” which is exactly opposite in concept and purpose of making for a reason.) Artists, philosophers, and scholars, before the age of mass education, were a minute minority of the human race. That they are a much larger minority today goes far to explain the vulgar decrepitude of modern times. Whether or not everyone in a modern democracy can be famous for 15 minutes, the chances of anyone becoming a great creative artist for a lifetime are infinitesimal, on the order of dying in a plane crash or being struck by lightning. The overwhelming majority of those people who have an

interest in art and learning at all are destined to be patrons of these things, not creators of them. That is to say, they will spend their lives in contemplation of them. And, while it is certainly possible to help a student to appreciate a Mozart sonata, a poem by John Donne, or a painting by Velásquez, it is the height of philistinism to grade him on the quality of his appreciation. Worse, it is the height of fatuity. Worse yet, it is, in one sense, entirely unrelated and, in another, completely antagonistic to the enjoyment of art. It is possible to listen to a Bach fugue, comprehending the structure of the piece in its every measure, and yet not be moved by it—which is to say, not to enjoy it. (The student who can do so nevertheless grades A-plus.) Conversely, it is possible to be moved by the whole without having attained to a technical comprehension of the sum of its parts. What sense does it make for the academic instructor to insist that I am not enjoying Bach's composition for the “correct” reasons? The fact remains that I feel the piece for *something* the composer put into it and that, since what Bach put into his fugue is *Bach*, I cannot go wrong in appreciating his work in any one of its aspects, at any level. (And why should I pay much heed to Professor Julius J. Julliard's remonstrances or care that he grades me C or C-minus?) The broader and fundamental objection to the competitive approach to a liberal-arts education really comes down to this: that the competitively precise assessment of the liberal-arts student is as much beside the point as the scientific evaluation of him as a gentleman would be. And the purpose of a college education should be—as once it was—to produce gentleman and ladies, not meritocratically distinguishable specialists of whom the world has an enormous surfeit already, together with a dearth of ladies and gentlemen. The issue, I suppose, can be put as follows: What level of academic accomplishment suffices for the civilized generalist? The answer is probably in the C to C-plus range.

When I was preparing to apply to colleges in the mid-1960's, the ideal—fixed beyond the most cogent object or rational argument—was “the well-rounded student.” (Though I was told of one admissions director at a prestigious New England college making mild fun of the applicant who “was so well-rounded he rolled away into a corner and was forgotten,” it seemed this gentleman pretty much rolled along with his counterparts

at other schools where the actual application of admissions criteria was concerned.) Since I have always detested this shallow positivistic ideal, together with most well-rounded people themselves, I should emphasize that well-roundedness is not what I have in mind. The notion that the model college acceptant should boast an A-plus or (as perfection is denoted these days) four-point average; have been elected class president and made captain of his high-school football team; served as editor of the school paper and shone as *matinée* idol of the Glee Club; spent his summers working with Habitat for Humanity or in his hometown ghetto and volunteered as poll-watcher on Election Day; and so on, and so forth is no more than a preposterous caricature of the prevailing liberal bourgeois mind. So far from directing young people toward reality, such absurdly artificial activities lead them away from it and into the fatuous mental morass of modernism. Young ladies and gentlemen ought to be introduced at the earliest possible age to the genteel pursuits of literature, the fine arts, history, and the natural sciences. Beyond that, and rigorous religious training, they need to be taught according to the formula of Jeff Cooper, and, before him, the court of ancient Persia: “to ride, shoot straight, and speak the truth.” None of these accomplishments is likely to be gained at college camp, for the obvious reason that neither camp nor college values such things.

There is a major and fundamental objection to be made to this alternative ideal, and with no reason to believe that a satisfactory answer to be made to it exists. The problem, of course, has to do with competition and success in later life. If grade-grubbing and academic achievement alone are recognized by the professional schools and rewarded by business and professional offers, then educated gentlemen must lose out competitively, not as individuals only but as a class, to the intellectual robber barons of the aspiring meritocracy. The civilized minority thus faces a choice: whether to become the enemy or to be displaced by him. The choice, to be certain, is a terrible one. It is not more terrible, however, than the billions of individual choices, some large, some small, faced by hundreds of millions of Christians—day in and day out, year after year, for the past two millennia—who, by some miracle of God, have not yet been displaced from Western civilization.

—C

The Best Revenge

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Bella Sicilia, Clara e Oscura

The rugged mountains lifting into the vaporous cloud cap that repeated their tumultuous form on the aerial plane looked familiar enough—sky islands, we call them in the American Southwest. Only these were real islands, rising from blue sea rather than sere desert floor, and the clouds surmounting them were more than atmospheric; they were Homeric. If Icarus had made it as far as Sicily from Crete before his unscheduled descent into the Icarian Sea, then this is how the island would have appeared to him from the air. By some miracle of physics, the intense Brownian motion produced by a few score of Sicilian schoolchildren returning home from spring break in Paris failed to melt the wings of the Aero Meridiana jet, and we landed toward the knife-blade Egadi Islands—on schedule at Aeroporto Falcone Borsellino, named for two of the Mafia's more prominent contemporary victims and engineered on a land spit hard between a limestone cliff and the Mediterranean Sea that offers the only flat piece of ground surrounding the ancient insular capital city of Palermo.

The island of Sicily has always been a place seemingly divided in equal parts between light and dark, on account not of geography only but also of its stature, lasting many centuries, as the center of civilization and the epicenter of *Globalpolitik*: quite literally, the most important place in the world. Sicily's significance resulted largely from two factors: its strategic location between the Italian peninsular boot and Cap Bon, at the narrow waist of the central Mediterranean where the European and African continents nearly meet; and the island's climate, soil, and topography, which allowed it to operate for hundreds of years as the granary of Europe. Of course, it is impossible for the center of the world, wherever it may happen to be at a given time, to escape that combination of brilliant light and stygian dark that is the world's most abiding and inescapable condition; and so it has been with Sicily. Since 1700 B.C., Sicels, Phoenicians, Greeks, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Swabians, Angevins, Aragonese, Bourbons, and Italian nationalists have succeeded, overlapped, and intermingled with

one another, at times more or less peaceably, often bloodily. Dynasties, usually proceeded by their outlying adventurers, have contended with one another, either with the blessing and support of the pope, or against them; finally, there is the Mafia. Sicily, in other words, is and always has been a worldly place. Worldliness, however, has its many intriguing, delightful, and comfortable aspects. And it is true, finally, that worldliness raised to a certain power achieves unworldliness by merging itself at the highest level of history, which, so far from being time-bound, is really timeless. And it is precisely here that the secret of Sicily, in all its covered intensity, rests.

The Grand Hôtel et des Palmes, on Via Roma near the English Church, is a distinctly Old World establishment, centrally located in a neighborhood of lion-colored façades, wrought-iron balconies, and French windows tight-shuttered against the sun behind huge rusty palm trees. Formerly the Palazzo Ingham where Richard Wagner composed *Parsifal*, the hotel is all marble floors and mahogany staircases, crimson carpet and golden drapes, 19th-century architecture and opulent modern fittings. Maureen and I dined that evening, together with Tom and Gail Fleming, Andrei Navrozov, and a few other early arrivals for The Rockford Institute's international convivium, at Mare Azzuro, a waterfront restaurant specializing in raw fish and shellfish. I no longer recall the Italian names of the various sea creatures, most of them indigenous to the Mediterranean, which we were served; as Shaw said of Wagner's music, however, the food was better than it sounds. In fact, it was superb, and so were the young, smooth, light Sicilian wines that accompanied the meal. The Mare Azzuro, though in décor resembling a clambake house in Seabright, New Jersey, while comparing price-wise with Manhattan's Oyster Bar, is a favorite of Andrei and sophisticated Palermitans, several of whom, being friends of the Flemings, joined us for supper. They had little or no English, and, though Maureen and I were no better in the Italian department, somehow everyone managed to make himself understood. Alfredo Giordano, who speaks no

English at all, is the business manager for the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, where Verdi's *Falstaff* premiered. He mentioned, in the course of the evening, that his daughter was making her debut that night as Nanetta, in La Scala's production of the same opera. Two mornings later, I spotted a notice in the local paper of the Scala performance, in which the critic had kind words for a bright new soprano named Laura Giordano.

Next day, while the group went out to look at the beautiful Byzantine-style church of "the Admiral," otherwise known at *La Martorana*, we inspected the Duomo, as well as the Palazzo dei Normanni, where Frederick II maintained the most splendid court in all of Europe before his death in 1250, and the Palazzo Sclafani; and then Maureen and I went together in search of Chiesa dei Vespri, or Santo Spirito, the late-12th-century church where the uprising of the Sicilians against the French occupiers commenced on Easter Monday 1282. *I Vespri Siciliani* (the Sicilian Vespers), as the rebellion is known, is among the most significant events in the history of Sicily and a major element in the mythology of Italian nationalism. Verdi wrote an opera of the same name around the subject, and that is something in a culture that understands its music as intensely as its history and frequently conflates the two. (In 1946, when Sicily demanded her independence from the mainland, an enormous crowd marched in Palermo, bellying "*Suoni la tromba*," or "Sound the trumpet"—the stirring bass-baritone duet from Bellini's opera *I Puritani*—from tens of thousands of throats. Vincenzo Bellini, called by Wagner "the gentle Sicilian," was a native of Catania.) Santo Spirito was founded in 1173 by Walter, Archbishop of Palermo. In the late 13th century, the building stood without the city wall; even today, most maps of Palermo indicate its location by an arrow pointing past the printed boundary into blank space.

Navigating by the guidebook, we discovered the church at last after a walk of an hour and a half from the hotel. Chiesa dei Vespri, they say, has been carefully restored to its original grimness. I believe it.

The church is surrounded by the Cimitero Sant' Orsola, an extensive marble necropolis planted to dark-looking juniper and cypress trees and decorated with statuary, framed portraits, fake flowers, and guttering prayer candles. Amidst all this, Santo Spirito stands yet: An edifice of decaying brick decorated by bands of volcanic stone, arches, and a few latticework windows, not much bigger than a large barn, with simple wooden doors painted a faded barn red, in color it is slightly lighter than dried blood. A lowering sky and craggy black cliffs in the distance accentuated the sense of gloom, and even of menace; certainly, it was not difficult to imagine the scene that occurred here on a spring evening, 722 years ago, when Sicilian marketgoers, enraged by the spectacle of a French officer making free with a young Sicilian wife, stabbed M. Drouet and his men to death and then, as church bells throughout Palermo tolled vespers, went on to massacre more than 2,000 French and French sympathizers overnight, hacking monks to death and ripping unborn children from the bellies of their mothers. The church was locked; we could not view it from inside. On the way out of the cemetery, Maureen and I passed what looked to be an entire village of Gambinos—at peace, we hoped, beneath and behind the proliferating *mementi vitae* placed by relatives and friends.

From Palermo, we traveled inland by bus to the cathedral of Monreale, William II's great masterpiece overlooking the Conca d'Oro, begun in 1174 and, without doubt, one of the architectural marvels of the Middle Ages. A mountain pass above Monreale makes it possible to bypass the coastal road from Palermo and descend to Castellammare del Golfo through the rugged Sicilian hills, deforested after nearly 4,000 years of human habitation but grassy green in early May and scattered with wildflowers: the famous scarlet Sicilian poppy, yellow daisy, and what I took to be a local version of blue larkspur. Red, yellow, blue; blood, gold, faith—the primary colors representing the primary, historical things. (Verdi worked them all into the overture he composed for his *Vespri*.) And below and beyond these, the towering purple headlands scarved with cloud, the bay stretching back in progressive shades of aquamarine to the wine-blue sea, and—nearly at our feet, it seemed—the terracotta town surrounded by greening vineyards and the twisted, sea-gray olive trees

converging upon each other in ordered rows in the moist maritime sunlight.

Segeste, Mozia, Selinunte . . . Phoenicians, Trojans, Greeks, Romans . . . ruins, excavations, reconstructions . . . wars, earthquakes, time itself . . . Sicily has the finest and most complete temples outside of mainland Greece. "What is the matter with human beings?" my wife wondered aloud. "There was room for all these different civilizations. Couldn't they find anything better to do than fight one another? Why can't people ever be satisfied with where they are, and what they have?"

Henry Adams thought that history was essentially meaningless, and that it is dishonest for a teacher of history (such as himself) to present it otherwise. Until a few hundred years ago, history was essentially the record of personal, tribal, and, finally, national ambition. (What is the "meaning" of King Roger of Aragon taking Sicily from Charles of Anjou, who had occupied the island? Of Charles fighting to get it back in his possession? Of the Pope siding with Charles rather than with Roger?) The ancient warfare of city-states was succeeded by dynastic warfare and wars fought by adventurers; these, in turn, were followed by the age of religious war and, finally, by that of ideological rivalry. (What is the "meaning" of Europe turned upside down in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity? Of perpetual war for perpetual peace in the name of international socialism or global secular-democratic capitalism?) What meaning history *does* have was introduced—or revealed, or clarified—in the birth of God Made Man, 2,000 years ago. Is that unimaginably stupendous event enough to give

meaning to *all* of history? Was it meant to? The distinction here is essentially Augustinian, that between the City of God and the City of Man. Obviously, the significance of the first is transcendent. But what of the City of Man? If it signifies anything at all, is that significance relational to the first, or independent of it? Does black mean anything beyond any comparison with white, or white with black? Or good with evil? Or the supernatural with the natural?

Agrigento, on Sicily's southern coast, was the Greeks' Akragas, the Romans' Agrigentum. In legend founded by Dædalus, this great city of the ancient world likely originated as a colony sent out from Gela around 580 B.C. The Carthaginians burned the city in 406 B.C., only to have it retaken from them and rebuilt by Timoleon in 340 B.C. In 261 B.C., the Romans took possession of Akragas, and once more in 210 B.C., from which time on they held the city until the collapse of the empire. Agrigentum fell to the Saracens in A.D. 827, and, in 1087, was delivered by Roger, the Norman count.

Across the bay from our hotel in the neighboring town of San Leone, the lights of Agrigento burned along the crest of the narrow ridge on which the modern as well as the ancient city is built; in the Valley of the Temples below, Herakles, Concord, Hera, and Zeus, illuminated by floodlights, stood forward like hoary tragedians, taking their bow. In the knowledge that the world is not divided between good and evil, light and dark, meaning and unmeaning, Augustine fought the heresy called Manichaeism. From long before that heresy existed, and ever since then, the Island of the Sicels has been fighting it, too.



Happy travelers in front of the Temple of Concord in Agrigento.



Islam is doubtless the greatest threat to Western civilization, but it is not the only one. Today, China is an economic threat; tomorrow, a military one. Cultural afflictions from "gay marriage" to anti-Christian hate groups are destroying us from within. Today, would the heroes of the Alamo find the civilization they died to defend?

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